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# KINGSTON PEACE NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF KINGSTON PEACE COUNCIL /  
CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

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## Pro-Gaza votes dent Labour landslide

*Independents triumph, Greens benefit, Starmer vote share down*

Keir Starmer's Labour Party lost both seats and overall vote share in the General Election as a direct result of its stance on the Israeli war on Gaza.

Having equivocated for months over calls for a ceasefire and with its leader initially supporting the Israeli position of cutting off the Palestinians' water, food and medical supplies the party alienated swathes of Muslim voters losing a total of five seats to Independent candidates while only holding on to others with greatly reduced majorities.

Subsequent analysis has revealed that the Party haemorrhaged half a million votes in areas with the highest Muslim populations. In the 21 seats where more than 30% of the population is Muslim Labour's vote share dropped by 29 percentage points from 65% in 2019 to just 36%.

Peace campaigners were especially heartened by the victory of Jeremy Corbyn in Islington North, beating the official Labour candidate by several thousand votes. It has also been noted that Corbyn, as Labour leader during the 2017 and 2019 General

Elections, secured a larger vote share across the UK as a whole than did Starmer in 2024.

Turnout dropped steeply this time round because of disaffection with Labour's manifesto overall but the most dramatic results were seen where

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*Jeremy Corbyn at his election declaration*



### Government tries to undermine pro-Palestinian MPs

The new Labour government, has claimed that election abuse and "disgraceful scenes" led to the election of five pro-Palestinian Independent MPs. Ignoring the fact that the Party's abject failure to call out Israeli war crimes in Gaza had lost it many thousands of votes, Home Secretary Yvette Cooper has ordered a rapid review of the recent election to assess "the scale of the problem". It seems that demanding why an MP didn't vote for a ceasefire now counts as intimidation!

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## Pro-Gaza vote dents Labour landslide

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pro-Palestine candidates stood. These included, in addition to Islington North, Leicester South, Birmingham Perry Bar and Blackburn where existing Labour MPs were ousted plus the new constituency of Dewsbury and Batley. Meanwhile Labour's Wes Streeting clung onto his seat by a mere 500-odd votes thanks to a tough challenge from British-Palestinian Leanne Mohamad, while Labour's appalling decision to ban local candidate Faiza Shaheen from representing the Party in Chingford and Woodford Green meant an almost certain chance of unseating senior Tory Ian Duncan Smith was thrown away as Shaheen stood as an Independent and came joint second with a hastily parachuted-in official Labour candidate allowing Duncan Smith to come through the middle and retain his seat.

### Forfeited

Labour may now have forfeited its ability to regain the pro-Palestine vote for a generation unless, in Government, it executes a dramatic re-setting of its attitude towards Israel-Palestine with, for example, a ban on arms sales to Netanyahu and early recognition of the state of Palestine.

## A quiet victory for BDS

A quiet victory that was all but overlooked as political parties and the mainstream media geared up for the July General Election, was the abandonment of the then Tory Government's anti-boycott bill.

The proposed legislation, whose main target was the BDS movement against Israeli goods, aimed to prevent public bodies from making ethical investment and spending decisions including cutting ties with companies complicit in Israeli apartheid against Palestine.

The bill along with a host of others fell when the General Election was called. Its demise delighted a wide range of campaigning organisations, not least among which were CND and the PSC who are now stepping up their campaigning for public bodies, including universities and local councils, to cut ties with companies that continue to do business that support Israel's war on Gaza and the destruction of Palestinian homes in the West Bank.

It remains to be seen whether the new Labour Government will re-introduce a form of anti-boycott legislation but an unexpected development has cast doubt on this, at least for now. A surprise appointment to Sir Keir Starmer's new cabinet was human rights barrister Richard Hermer as attorney general. Ditching Emily Thornberry who had shadowed the role in opposition, Starmer chose the leading barrister – who has been elevated to the House of Lords – and who has previously been quite unequivocal in his opposition to the anti-boycott legislation. Hermer described the bill as having “a profoundly detrimental impact on the UK's ability to protect and promote human rights overseas”.

On the issue of Gaza the prominent Jewish lawyer also said, in the wake of the October 7 Hamas attack, that it was “almost impossible to conceive” how an Israeli siege that denied civilians food, water and electricity – supported at the time by Thornbury and Starmer himself – could possibly be in compliance with international law.

## Elbit secret deal exposed

A £100million hook-up between Israel's largest arms manufacturer Elbit and the former Tory Government has been uncovered by satirical magazine *Private Eye*.

Using freedom of information legislation the mag uncovered the fact of a previously undisclosed meeting between the company, which operates from a number of sites in the UK, and the chief scientific adviser at the Department of Business and Trade, Professor Julia Sutcliffe.

Sutcliffe, previously chief technologist at BAE Systems, was appointed in February 2023 by then Business Secretary Kemi Badenoch. A subsequent meeting between Sutcliffe and Elbit was not listed in the Department's public register of official meetings. *Private Eye* only learned it had taken place via another document on official engagements. One email uncovered reported that “The aim of the meeting is for [Elbit] to brief Julia on Elbit's plans for growing R&D work in the UK and consequently to see how DBT [Department of Business and Trade] can support that.” UK Defence and Security Exports – another part of DBT – was said to be “especially pleased to welcome” Sutcliffe to the department given her previous role, i.e. in the UK arms industry.

# Ukraine-Gaza double standards

Western leaders queued up to deprecate (quite rightly) the alleged\* Russian missile attack on a Kyiv children's hospital last month.

The volume and passion of their reaction – President Biden attacked the “horrific reminder of Russia’s brutality,” Sir Keir Starmer condemned “attacking innocent children” - was in stark contrast to the muted tones with which those same men have greeted the ongoing destruction of all of Gaza’s medical facilities by Israeli forces. On the very day they met at a Nato conference following the Kyiv incident Israeli forces killed Palestinian children playing football at a refugee camp in Gaza. No word from Biden or Starmer in condemning this!

## Reprehensible

Any and all deaths of civilians in war is equally reprehensible, whoever the victims.

But the selective anger of Nato leaders underlines the appalling double standards employed by many Western nations when considering the innocent victims of the two conflicts. The damage that such hypocrisy has done to the world order was expressed most eloquently by King Abdullah II of Jordan shortly after the wanton destruction of Gaza was unleashed. He said: “The message that the Arab world is hearing is loud and clear. Palestinian lives matter less than Israeli ones. Our lives matter less than other lives. The application of the international laws is optional. Human rights have boundaries, they stop at borders, at races, at religions.”

An Indonesian aid organisation, meanwhile, reacting to the Israeli destruction of the Indonesian Hospital in Gaza, wrote to Biden stating: “You have destroyed the international rules of the game, insulted the authority of the United Nations, torn apart the sense of justice, hurt human values, and tarnished the face of human civilization.”

## American response

The American response to the Kyiv hospital attack: send more billions to Ukraine to improve its anti-missile defences; the American response to Israel’s continued slaughter of Gaza’s population: keep sending Israel the weapons to continue the slaughter.

But if there is a massive disconnect between

attitudes towards the two conflicts within the minds of Western leaders, Ukrainian officials have sought to find common ground, but not in the way you might initially think. From its presidential office to its armed forces, Kyiv has drawn equivalences between Ukraine and Israel, Ukraine’s military releasing a video portraying both Israel and Ukraine as victims waging wars in defence of “civilization” against those who had “stolen” their land. Ukrainian squaddies appear to believe that Palestinians have stolen Gaza from Israel!

Clearly, such a message (subtitled in English) would please the rich American backers of the US government’s multi-billion dollar support of Ukraine.

Writing on the website *Open Democracy* former UN official Chelsea Ngoc Minh Nguyen concluded an article on the threat of double standards to a functioning world order as follows: at stake now is not only Ukraine’s and Palestine’s national survival, but the survival of international law and anything that is left of basic human decency. The violence and brutality of the last two years must prompt all of us – whether in the Global South or North, East or West – to enter into an honest and thorough introspection about the kind of world that we want to live in.

[\* we have described the Russian missile attack that hit the Kyiv hospital as ‘alleged’ to allow for the fact that a number of US commentators with military and intelligence backgrounds have suggested that the damage could have been done by a Ukrainian anti-missile missile that went off course – Ed]

The number of health-care workers killed by the Israel Defence Force in Gaza is now the highest in any single conflict in United Nations history, reports *Private Eye*. The actual toll is unclear but is around 500. These include doctors, nurses, dentists, medical students and lab technicians. The death of one, Dr Iyad al-Rantisi, head of the women’s hospital in Beit Lahia, was only publicly acknowledged in June although he is now known to have died in an Israeli prison in November. An Israeli court issued a gag order forbidding mention of his death for six months. Reference to the gag order was also prohibited.

# Climate cost of war finally exposed



New research has for the first time addressed the issue of how much damage specific conflicts have done to the global climate. The climate cost of the first two years of Russia's war on Ukraine was greater than the annual greenhouse gas emissions generated individually by 175 countries, exacerbating the global climate emergency in addition to the mounting death toll and widespread destruction.

The research was undertaken by the Initiative on Greenhouse Gas Accounting of War (IGGAW) – a research collective partly funded by the German and Swedish governments, and the European Climate Foundation. It has assessed that Russia's invasion has generated at least 175m tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e), amid a surge in emissions from direct warfare, landscape fires, rerouted flights, forced migration and leaks caused by military attacks on fossil fuel infrastructure – as well as the future carbon cost of reconstruction.

It suggests the Russian Federation faces a \$32bn (£25bn) climate reparations bill from its first 24 months of war. The UN General Assembly agreed and the Council of Europe responded by setting up a registry of damage which may include emissions to the climate.

Lead author of the report Lennard de Klerk, said: "Russia is harming Ukraine but also our climate. This 'conflict carbon' is sizeable and will be felt globally. The Russian Federation should be made to pay for this, a debt it owes Ukraine and countries in the global south that will suffer most from climate damage."

Separately, Israel's assault of Gaza (pictured) has been assessed for climate impact. The Social Science Research Network has estimated that reconstructing the buildings destroyed by Israel in the first four months of the nine-month war would generate 60 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e. This is on a par with the total 2022 emissions generated by countries such as Portugal and Sweden – and more than twice the annual emissions of Afghanistan.

Almost 30% of the total CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions were generated by the 244 American cargo planes known to have flown bombs, munitions and other military supplies to Israel in the first 120 days.

The Israeli government did not respond to requests for comment on the research.

# Bye, bye Biden

Joe Biden's decision finally to bow out of the race for this November's US presidential election removed a cause of panic that had gripped the Democratic Party for more than three weeks since that catastrophic debate against Donald Trump and almost daily examples of Biden's failing mental acuity. The final blow, ironically, was the assassination attempt that gave his Republican rival Donald Trump almost mythical heroic qualities among supporters.

Biden's excuses for the debate debacle – he was jet lagged, he had a cold – plus revelations from the American media that he doesn't get up in the morning till after 10am and effectively finishes work for the day by 4pm - should have ended his candidacy much earlier than it did.

The commander-in-chief of the planet's most powerful military needs to be at the top of his, or her, game in the excessively dangerous world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

One only has to look back to how expertly JFK handled the 13 days of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. Global crises are likely to turn up at inconvenient times without prior warning, maybe when you've got a cold, or are jet lagged, or outside your preferred work hours of 10am to 4pm.

## Not bode well

Seeing Biden stumble over his responses to Trump, or in a later interview with George Stephanopoulos, or in introducing Zelensky as President Putin at the Nato summit, did not bode well when the basic requirement of the job is to be capable of clear, concise and unequivocal decision making in an emergency.

While pro-Biden supporters, in the Democratic Party and the US media, pointed endlessly to the success of his domestic policies after nearly four years in office, and these are indeed impressive, there is another Joe Biden that merited much closer consideration. His foreign policy record is significantly tarnished. He put America's defeat in Vietnam down to a failure of policy and railed against student protests, he supported the Iraq War at the outset then tried to row back from that claiming, in 2005, that he had actually opposed the conflict. As President he oversaw America's chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan after, reportedly, ignoring the advice of his senior military commanders about a phased evacuation. Instead, he set a specific date without reference to

actual conditions on the ground. The result was further chaos and deaths.

At the Nato summit last month he claimed "We are making the world safer and stronger" while there are two major ongoing conflicts – Ukraine and Gaza - neither of which show any sign of coming to an end but risk spreading to neighbouring states.

## Fossilized mindset

His flawed decision making and follow-up attempts to rewrite history over Vietnam and Iraq occurred when Biden was, we assume, fully *compos mentis*. Now look at his record, especially concerning Gaza where his fossilized mindset over Israel has made the US complicit in genocide and damaged America's standing in the world, probably for generations.

Writing recently in *The 'i'* newspaper Patrick Cockburn said: "It is astonishing how the larger European members of Nato have allowed themselves to become more dependent on the US because of the Ukraine war under a US leader whose judgment is visibly impaired by senility. In the event, he is as obstinate in denying the awful realities of Ukraine and Gaza as he is obstinate in denying his own reduced cognitive abilities."

We have yet to see if his Vice President Kamala Harris will indeed be the Democratic nominee (although at the time of going to press this seemed increasingly likely) and whether she, or any other Democratic challenger, will be able to wrong foot and defeat Trump.

But whatever occurs the US-guided Western European response to both the Ukraine and Gazan conflicts has already underlined the woeful lack of statecraft and diplomatic ability that seems to be the hallmark of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to date.

## Completely insane

The Patrick Cockburn article in *The 'i'* ended with a quote from Anatol Lieven, director of the Eurasian Programme at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft who said: "Assuming that we have any descendants, they are likely to view us as we do the European elites before 1914; trapped by their inherited culture and institutions, they pursued policies that seemed rational to them but, in retrospect, look completely insane."

**'If wars can be started by lies, peace can be started by truth.'**

*Julian Assange*



## Hoist by their own Petard

The 2024 Oscar for the Best International Film was awarded to *The Zone of Interest* universally praised and nominated for four other additional Oscars. This incandescent film portrays the idyllic life that the family of Nazi commandant Rudolf Hoss enjoyed in a sumptuous house right next to the concentration camp in Auschwitz in the middle of the Holocaust. Through the portrayal of this one family determined to lead a 'normal' life with their happy little children it explores how human beings can train themselves to look away from the worst of horrors if they think it does not or should not affect them.

Today, with the internet, we live in an age when an ongoing "plausible genocide" is brought into our homes, on our phones and on our TV screens live and in full technicolour, with no wall to block it out, save for the wall of denial we erect to preserve our 'normal' lives.

The no doubt good people on the Ham Fair committee decided that neither they nor the visitors to the Fair in June should be bothered by even the slightest reminder of the reality of

Palestinian lives being butchered. So they banned the Richmond and Kingston Palestine Solidarity Campaign from having a stall at the fair, even though we would have stuck by our past ten year plus policy and done not much more than sell Palestinian produce to help their farmers trying to eke out a living.

Taking a lesson from our Palestinian comrades we decided that we would not be bullied into quiet submission. A 'guerrilla' stall on the edge of the fair was planned and this time we would not restrict ourselves merely to selling Palestinian produce but would make a bold statement about the injustice in Palestine and the injustice meted out to us. To our great delight we were assisted in this venture by a knight in shining armour – Mr. Luke Dickinson - a long time Ham Common resident and a supporter of Palestine who was suitably enraged on hearing about the ban. Providentially, Luke's beautiful home (pictured above) is situated in the best possible vantage point for our stall. He suggested we utilise his extensive walls (see opposite), the magnificent

iron gates and the driveway to make our stall as effective as possible. And we certainly did! The walls were plastered with huge six foot flags and dozens of posters. Tables were set up in the driveway for selling Zaytoun olive oil, zaatar and other produce which was all sold out by the end of the day. People saw our flags fluttering from trees and lamp posts and made their way to the stall. Unfortunately, some avid Zionists also made their way to the stall with complaints - ironically, the most common complaint was that we were upsetting their children! Nary a thought for how the ten Gazan children a day who had to have one

or more limbs amputated – often without anaesthetics – might be “upset”. The police were informed when one loud-mouthed Zionist decided to rip down our flag. Not only did the police agree that we were not doing anything outside the law but we were asked to call them if we received any more threats or harassment. So, all in all, a hugely successful event and a reminder to the Ham Fair committee members that being hoist by your own petard can be a painful process.

*Roshan Pedder*



## French authorities ban Israeli firms from Paris arms fair

Confusion reigned in June as to whether Israeli arms and technology companies were actually going to turn up at an international arms fair in Paris.

To their great credit, the French Defence Ministry had instructed the organisers of Eurosatory 2024 to ban Israeli companies from exhibiting at the show. The reason given was that “the conditions are no longer right to host Israeli companies at the Paris show, given that the French President is calling for the cessation of IDF operations in Rafah.”

Then a French court struck down this restriction arguing that to ban Israel would amount to discrimination. Meanwhile a second French court ruled that the organisers of the exhibition must ban anyone working for or representing Israeli firms from participating in the event.

*The Times of Israel*, reporting the issue, said it had contacted the leading Israeli defence firms as the exhibition opened but that none were “rushing to attend”. Rafael Advanced Defence Systems said it would not be setting up a stall or sending representatives, while Elbit Systems refused to comment.

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**Disclaimer:** The views  
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**Crunching numbers**

**£2.5bn**

Annual cost to the  
Government of lifting  
250,000+ children out of  
poverty by abolishing the  
two-child cap.

**£3bn**

Annual Government grant  
promised to Ukraine 'for  
as long as it takes' to  
defeat Russia.

**Dates for your Diary**

August 2024

**Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> August to Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> September**

A Say in the End of the World: Solidarity and Nuclear Defence in the Cold War. Exhibition at London School of Economics. It explores networks of solidarity between groups campaigning on peace, nuclear weapons and national self-determination. It approaches the issue from the standpoint of both CND and CAAT but also displays material from opponents of nuclear disarmament, including the group Women and Families for Defence which was active in the 1980s. Curated by Open University PhD student Gareth Bryant. Free entry. Library Gallery, LSE Library, 10, Portugal Street WC2A 2HD. Hours: Mon to Fri 9am to 7pm, Sat and Sun 11am to 6pm.

**Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> August**

KPC Hiroshima Commemoration  
12 noon to 2pm A silent vigil opposite the Bentall Centre entrance, Kingston.  
8pm ceremony Kingston Riverside with Mayor of Kingston attending. White  
flowers will be strewn on the river. A minute's silence will be observed

London CND Hiroshima Commemoration

12 noon Tavistock Square WC1H 9BQ  
Speakers include CND General Secretary Kate Hudson and Murad Qureshi,  
chair of the London branch of the Socialist Environment and Resources  
Association.

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> August**

Divest for Palestine. Conference on the need to discuss urgent need to  
escalate the struggle for Palestinian freedom by cutting ties to apartheid and  
divesting funds from companies that are arming and enabling Israel's  
genocide. Speakers include Omar Barghouti, co-founder of the BDS  
movement; Ghassan Abu-Sittah, British-Palestinian surgeon; Ben Jamal,  
Director of PSC; Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur on human  
rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. 10.am till 4.30pm.  
Central Hall Westminster. Fully booked but a waiting list is in operation.  
Contact: <https://palestinecampaign.org/>

**Monday 26<sup>th</sup> August**

Carshalton Fair. KPC will have it usual stall and hopes to raise plenty of  
funds at this well-attended event. Helpers wanted for the stall and also to  
deliver and collect the equipment and goods needed for a successful day.  
Please contact Maggie Rees on [maggie@galdor.co.uk](mailto:maggie@galdor.co.uk)

**STOP PRESS:**

**UK restores funding to UNRWA**

Foreign Secretary David Lammy announced (July 19) that  
Britain was restoring its funding to UNRWA in Gaza  
following an independent review of Israeli claims that the  
relief agency had been infiltrated by Hamas. The review, by a  
former French diplomat, had been given no evidence by  
Israel to substantiate its claim.

**Israel killed its own people on October 7**

Left wing Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* has substantiated claims from  
other sources that Israeli forces responding to the Hamas attack on  
October 7 will have killed their own people to prevent them from  
being taken hostage. Emails uncovered at three army facilities  
proved the so-called Hannibal Directive had been in operation.