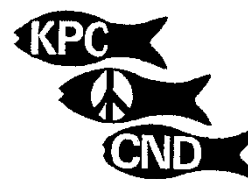


September/October 2024

# KINGSTON PEACE NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF KINGSTON PEACE COUNCIL /  
CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

<http://kpc.gn.apc.org> [www.facebook.com/kingstonpeace](http://www.facebook.com/kingstonpeace)



## Thanks to the Middle East Monitor for this Report

**A senior British diplomat has resigned from the Foreign Office over the UK's continued arms sales to Israel**, which he said have “no justification”.

Mark Smith, the head of Africa Programmes and Expertise Department and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, submitted a resignation letter entitled “FCDO complicity in War Crimes”, reports have revealed.

“It is with sadness that I resign after a long career in the diplomatic service,” he wrote, “however I can no longer carry out my duties in the knowledge that this Department may be complicit in War Crimes.”

“Each day we witness clear and unquestionable examples of War Crimes and breaches of International Humanitarian Law in Gaza perpetrated by the State of Israel,” he continued.

He went on to highlight how “senior members of the Israeli government and military have expressed open genocidal intent, Israeli soldiers take videos, deliberately burning, destroying, and looting civilian property and openly admit to the rape and torture of prisoners.”

Adding that such actions, along with the displacement of over 80 per cent of Gaza's civilian population “are War Crimes”, he said “there is no justification for the UK's continued arms sales to Israel yet somehow it continues.”

Smith explained that he tried to raise his concerns while in office, including through “an official whistle blowing investigation”, however nothing came of his efforts. Describing his role as a “subject matter expert in the domain of armed sales policy”, he questioned the UK's claim that it has a “robust and transparent” arms export licensing system, when his concerns were “disregarded in this way” and urged the FCDO to change track in the hope that “we can look back on history and be proud.”

*NB Thanks also to Phil Cooper for finding this – and reporting that the BBC were very slow to catch up on it - their Washington correspondent reporting it a day or more later.*

## Benjamin Britten's War Requiem was recently performed at the BBC Promenade Concerts.

Albert Beale of the Peace Pledge Union had a good idea.

As Benjamin Britten was a pacifist and a member of the Peace Pledge Union, and this music clearly reflects this, why not place an advertisement in the Proms programme?

So PPU wrote the copy and booked the space with the publishers.

**But later they were told that the BBC had overruled the acceptance of the advert, because of its “political basis”.**

Ridiculous of course - in that case why allow such subversive music to be played?

But Albert and colleagues were not down-hearted – they found a solution.

Turn to page 6 to find out what they did.

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## Some Good News from Richmond and Kingston Palestine Solidarity Campaign



Protest outside Twickenham Rugby Stadium in Jan 2024

### TIME TO CELEBRATE!

**After 4 years of our campaigning, the International Armoured Vehicles conference is not going to be in Twickenham in 2025!**

For a number of years pre- and post-Covid, Twickenham Stadium had quietly been hosting military suppliers to some of the world's most heinous regimes - amongst them the Israeli and Saudi militaries. Guests from their armies would hobnob with representatives of companies like Raytheon, Elbit, Leonardo and others to see the latest in military vehicles to help their regimes repress their own people and attack others.

This happened even at the start of this year. Even as the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza by Israel's military was unfolding - over 40,000 dead including 16,000 children to date - the suppliers of the weapons used turned up at the Stadium which boasts of its focus on community and fair play.

As though there's anything mildly fair about Palestinian children being killed by the army of the fourth most militarised country on the planet.

You, our supporters, have come out in protest about this for the last 4 years. You supported our stalls in the centre of Twickenham. You helped us leaflet the Stadium's neighbourhood. You signed our petitions with over 14,000 signatures. You engaged the local press and social media. You joined our campaign, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. You hooted at our stalls. And you turned up in your hundreds to the Stadium on the days of the conference to let the arms dealers know they were not welcome.

In short, you stopped the RFU from hosting this event quietly! And you let them know that making money from conferences where genocide enablers meet genocidal regimes wasn't something you felt was in a "community spirit".

And for the first time in recent years, the conference in 2025 will no longer be held in Twickenham Stadium!

Thank you to everyone who has taken any kind of action in support of this. Thank you to the committee who organised it. Thank you to the many partner organisations who saw that this should not be welcome in our community, and mobilised their supporters. It demonstrates that when we take action collectively, we can make a difference.

The only downside is that although we've driven this event out of our area and community, we haven't managed to cancel it entirely. In 2025, they will be convening their meeting of genocide-enablers in Farnborough. But we are already talking to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign branch there so they can pick up where we left off, and make it clear that there's no place where this kind of conference is welcome.

Thank you all for your support on this. With your support, we'll continue our work until Palestinians have their rights as human beings recognised. We'll make sure they know that you've sent this message to the arms dealers.

And this Palestinian for one is grateful that you've stood up shoulder to shoulder with us.

*Iyas AlQasem, Chair of Richmond and Kingston Palestine Solidarity Campaign*

## Hiroshima Vigil in Kingston Town Centre - 6<sup>th</sup> August 2024



*Thanks to Maggie Rees for the photo, which shows Diana, Martin Lake, Gill, Mary and me*

For the last few years we have, in addition to our usual evening Hiroshima commemoration, held a 2 hour vigil in the town centre of Kingston at lunchtime. This year we were unfortunate with the weather, we had pretty constant drizzle. However in spite of this there was quite a lot of interest from the passers-by, and we managed to give out nearly 500 leaflets about the Hiroshima bombing, and informing people about our event later that evening. Several people also took a newsletter.

## Hiroshima Evening Commemoration – 6<sup>th</sup> August



*Kingston Mayor Cllr Liz Green joined Peace Council supporters to strew white flowers on the Thames  
(image by Oliver Monk [www.oilliegmonk.com](http://www.oilliegmonk.com))*

Members of Kingston Peace Council/CND and friends gathered at Kingston Riverside, Canbury Gardens in the evening to commemorate the anniversary of the destruction of Hiroshima by the first atomic bomb to be used on an inhabited city at the end of the Second World War.

We were joined by Mayor of Kingston Cllr Liz Green on the evening of August 6, the 79<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bomb that caused the immediate deaths of 140,000 Japanese citizens, and very many more in the months and years to come.

Also remembered was the dropping of a second American atomic bomb three days later on the city of Nagasaki, killing a further 74,000 people.

In his speech, our Press Officer Phil Cooper said the numbers killed as a result of the two attacks were equivalent to every man, woman and child currently living in the Borough of Kingston as well as Hampton, Teddington and most of Twickenham.

And he reminded the crowd of supporters, which included members of the local Japanese community, that the current international situation, especially the conflict in Ukraine, is making the threat of a nuclear war a very real threat to the world.

He quoted UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres' recent warning that "Humanity is on a knife edge; the risk of a nuclear weapon being used has reached heights not seen since the cold war". The Mayor also gave a short speech, stressing how important it is that these dreadful events are never forgotten, especially as those with personal memories are replaced by younger generations with no such memories.

A minute's silence was then observed in memory of all victims of all wars, and to pledge ourselves to "Never Again". White flowers were then cast onto the river in remembrance of the dead.

## Phil Cooper's Speech

Madam Mayor, ladies and gentlemen, thank you all for coming here this evening for this, the 79<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the destruction of Hiroshima by an American atomic bomb, the world's first. Three days later the world's second atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Nagasaki.

This is a modest event that we hold in this location every year, but it is one of many that take place on this day across the globe as people gather to express their horror at what occurred all those decades ago, their hope that it will never happen again, anywhere to any nation, and their determination to speak out against any suggestion that it could, and that it might even be considered.

The largest such event is of course in Hiroshima itself and today a commemoration was held attended by representatives of a record 115 countries, a fact that signifies that a growing number of nations are concerned that the often fragile prohibition on the use of nuclear weapons that has held good since the end of the Second World War may not do so for much longer. This is certainly the fear expressed recently by Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations, who warned: "Humanity is on a knife-edge; the risk of a nuclear weapon being used has reached heights not seen since the cold war. States are engaged in a qualitative arms race. Technologies like artificial intelligence are multiplying the danger."

And he added: "All countries must agree that any decision on nuclear use is made by humans, not machines or algorithms."

He also called for all nuclear-armed nations to pledge not to be the first to use nuclear weapons. Most nuclear countries, including the UK and the US, have yet to do so. In fact China and India are the only nuclear armed countries that so far have a No First Use policy.

As he spoke, of course, we have ongoing major conflicts in Ukraine and in Israel. In the Ukraine War President Putin has made frequent threats to use his nuclear arsenal if Russia is attacked directly. NATO, meanwhile,

has been supplying Ukraine with more and more conventional weapons capable of doing just that while planning to base nuclear weapons in more and more European countries, including here in the UK.

Politicians and military leaders are all talking tough but nobody, who should be, is talking seriously about peace. Whatever happened to diplomacy and statesmanship?

To look back 79 years, the "small" atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima killed an estimated 140,000, the Nagasaki bomb some 74,000. That total of more than 210,000 is equivalent to every man, woman and child currently living in the Borough of Kingston upon Thames and nearby in Teddington, Hampton and most of Twickenham.

We will continue to raise our voices against the development, deployment and threats to use the nuclear weapons which hold us all hostage and we hope you will, too. In a moment we will invite you to approach the riverside and strew flowers onto the waters.

But first, it is my pleasure to invite the Mayor of the Royal Borough, Cllr Liz Green, to say a few words after which we will observe a minute's silence, in memory of all who have died, and continue to die, in wars.



## Demonisation of China

Members and other readers may remember there was a recent Nato Conference during which, amongst other comments, much was said about China not doing enough to blame Russia for their invasion of and attacks on Ukraine. Phil Cooper had some thoughts about this, and also did some research, as a result of which he has submitted the following article to Kingston Peace News:-

Not satisfied with ratcheting up the amounts of sophisticated weaponry promised to President Zelensky – some \$40billion worth – at its recent summit in Washington, NATO has now decided to blame China for Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine.

The Alliance's leaders have labelled China a "decisive enabler" of Russia's war and called its ties with Moscow a cause of "deep concern"

The accusations, clearly aimed at setting up a future conflict with China because its economic growth and influence around the globe is outpacing that of the US, comes at a time when UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres was sounding a dire warning both about the build-up of nuclear arsenals and the threat posed by Artificial Intelligence in the control of weapon systems.

China's response to the NATO communique was to brand it "malicious". It also expressed its displeasure with the Alliance's desire to expand into the Asia-Pacific region.

Guterres' warning came in the wake of a 13% rise in global spending on nuclear weapons – now totalling almost \$100 billion this year, driven mainly by the United States. China's level of nuclear weapon expenditure increase is second only to that of America although the latter's overall defence budget is bigger than that of the next nine countries, China and Russia included, put together.

The Secretary General also made an impassioned plea to nuclear weapons states to take their previous non-proliferation obligations seriously and for all to agree to a no first use policy. There are fears that in the drive to bolster each nation's deterrent, launch procedures are being streamlined potentially with the help of AI.

"Humanity is on a knife-edge," said Guterres, "the risk of a nuclear weapon being used has reached heights not seen since the cold war."

### *Footnote:*

NATO and the US's obsession with the "threat" posed to world peace by China can be put into perspective by the following statistics:

#### **Number of military bases worldwide**

USA	in excess of 759 in 80 countries
China	1 (in Djibouti, Horn of Africa)

#### **Number of nuclear weapons**

USA	5,400 (of which almost 50% are on hair-trigger alert)
China	400-500 (of which none are on hair-trigger alert)

China maintains a 'no first use' policy in respect of its nuclear weapons. The USA has no such policy.

*Editor's comment I think this is a welcome reminder of how easy it is to forget some such salient facts, and to be too easily misled by the constant media hubbub around such important issues.*

## Britten's War Requiem

*cont'd from front page*

This is what they did – they turned the advert into a leaflet, and a number of people from PPU and other organisations handed out about 1,000 to those arriving for the concert, including to members of the orchestra and choirs as they arrived.

Here is some of the wording:-

"Britten's War Requiem is a profound expression of his personal renunciation of war. His art and his life, as with many great creative artists, were not separate. ....

"The belief that warfare is never the answer, and that better ways of dealing with conflict can and must be found, are not just part of our political and musical history. The ideals that inspired Britten continue to inspire people today – including the thousands of current members of the Peace Pledge Union and its sister organisations around the world."

[www.ppu.org.uk](http://www.ppu.org.uk) 020 7424 9444

# Recent events at Lakenheath



Kingston Peace Council/CND is a member of the Lakenheath Alliance for Peace (LAP), a coalition of groups dedicated to preventing the return of US Nuclear weapons to USAF Lakenheath.

See <https://lakenheathallianceforpeace.org.uk/>

After their recent march and peace camp LAP issued the following press release:

## **We Came in Peace. We Leave in Peace. We will Return in Peace.**

On July 25<sup>th</sup> 2024 after setting off from Norwich on 13<sup>th</sup> July and 10 days of a 24/7 camp and vigil at the main gate of RAF(USAF)Lakenheath to protest the return of US nuclear weapons to UK soil, the Lakenheath Alliance for Peace (LAP) camp ceremonially packed up and left the gift of an olive tree to the USAF Commanders – “From the Peace Camp **in Peace**.” It is hoped it will be received with courtesy, unlike the refusal to receive a letter explaining why the Peace Camp was there, which resulted in the arrest of two people trying to deliver the letter.

As each day of the Peace Camp passed more and more people beeped their horns, waved at the people at the camp and stopped to say hello. The support for the camp and its message of peace got stronger and stronger. We were talking to a group of young men one day and they said “We really respect what you are doing. Your message is clear – No Nuclear Weapons at USAF Lakenheath and we agree with it. None of us want war or the USAF base there. Your peaceful camp, without disrupting local peoples’ lives, is welcomed.” During the time at the peace camp over a hundred people took part and

there were many local visitors calling in to give their support. Local media coverage was positive and awareness is being raised about what happens at RAF (USAF) Lakenheath.

Supporting events took place in other areas of the UK, including Bradford and District CND at RAF Menwith Hill Peace Camp. More individuals and organisations are joining the Lakenheath Alliance for Peace, and we will continue to try and have a dialogue with the USAF base commanders. The Peace Camp will return to continue peacefully demanding that **no US nuclear weapons be brought to UK soil.**

This is just a beginning.

**We will return in Peace**

**The Gift from LAP to USAF**



*NB – sorry to say only one member of KPC/CND (Ailsa from Penzance) was able to participate in the walk or the camp this time. We will try and do better next time.*

**KINGSTON PEACE COUNCIL  
/ CND**

Subscription rates:  
£8 annually,  
£10 family membership,  
£3 unwaged

**CHAIRPERSON and  
SECRETARY**

**Positions vacant.**

Please offer if you could help as secretary. At present several people are sharing these jobs.

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**Disclaimer:** The views expressed in this edition are not necessarily those of Kingston Peace Council/CND

**Our Regular Stalls in Kingston Market Place take place on 1st and 3rd Saturdays of the month, outside the gates of All Saints Church Kingston, in the market place.**

Dates for September will be Saturdays 7<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> and for October Saturdays 5<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. We start at 11am and have 2 or 3 one-hour shifts. Please contact Angie Cooper 020 8399 5537 to help, [angecooper47@hotmail.com](mailto:angecooper47@hotmail.com) (If you are new to this, you will always be with an experienced member).

**Forthcoming Events (Some online)**

Sat, 07/09/2024 - 12:00

**National march for Palestine: stop arming Israel!**

Assemble Pall Mall – march to Israeli Embassy to tell the government to end the genocide; stop arming Israel; and say no to a Middle East war; and no to Islamophobia! Protest called by: Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Friends of Al-Aqsa, Stop the War Coalition, Muslim Association of Britain, Palestinian Forum in Britain, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.  
**We suggest KPC members meet at front by CND banner.**

Sat, 14/09/2024 – 10.30am – 4pm

**“Alternatives to War in a Time of Global Crisis”,**

**Movement for the Abolition of War Day Conference** with speakers: Paul Rogers, John Gittings, Diana Francis, Jonathan Cohen, Tanya Hubbard, Gwen Burnyeat and Rachel Clogg. As well as talks and discussions, there will be time for participants to network. At Sands Film Studio, 82, St Marychurch Street, Rotherhithe, London SE16 4HZ, **also online.**

More information at <https://abolishwar.net/Alternatives-to-war>

Mon, 16/09 – Sun, 22/09/2024

**ICAN Global Week of Action on Nuclear Spending**

Details on [www.icanw.org](http://www.icanw.org)

ICAN will be taking on the absurd amount of money spent on nuclear weapons with a global week of action with one clear message: “No Money for Nuclear Weapons!”

Sat, 21/09/2024 (All day)

**UN International Day of Peace, world-wide**

**KPC/CND will have their usual stall in the market place**, we will have doves for children and adults to write messages of peace which will be hung on our “tree”. This will then be displayed in All Saints Church for a week or so.

Sat, 21/09 – Sat, 28/09/2024 **The first annual Week of Action for Peace and Climate Justice will address the links between war, militarism and climate injustice**, promoting grassroots action and policy making for peace and climate justice. This year’s theme is divest from war – invest in climate justice.

<https://climatemilitarism.org/weekofaction>

Tues 24/9 and Thurs 26/9 As part of the above, **London Action – Help Needed. Movement for the Abolition of War has arranged two leafletting days with placards to raise awareness of these links, outside two Government Departments, to say net zero can’t be achieved without tackling military-related emissions** – no green-washing.

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

Sat, 05/10/2024 (All day)

**CND AGM and Policy Conference Online**

Attendance is free of charge for CND members, but registration (by 27 Sept) is essential. [www.cnduk.org/about/cnd-conference](http://www.cnduk.org/about/cnd-conference)

Wed, 09/10/2024 - 12:00

**Demonstration as part of global Keep Space for Peace week**, opposing the MoD’s actions in militarising space, including development of a US space war radar in Pembrokeshire and plans to launch military-capable satellites into orbit from Scotland. Bring banners and placards to the Ministry of Defence, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB. <https://spacewatch.uk/>

Sat, 12/10/2024 (All day)

**A new agenda for peace and justice: its time is now.**

**CND public conference**, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). Join CND for a day of analysis, debate, and planning for action. The conference will be followed by a reception marking Kate Hudson’s retirement as General Secretary.

[www.cnduk.org/events](http://www.cnduk.org/events)