

January/February 2025

# KINGSTON PEACE NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF KINGSTON PEACE COUNCIL /  
CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

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## A-Bomb survivors honoured with Nobel Prize

The dwindling number of atomic bomb survivors – the Hibakusha – received international recognition in December when their representatives accepted the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize.

Nearly 80 years after America dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, survivors' organisation, Nidon Hidankyo, was in Oslo to accept the award and was applauded for its continual efforts "to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and for demonstrating through witness testimony that nuclear weapons must never be used again."

### Tireless campaigning

The Peace Prize citation referred to the fact that the survivors' tireless campaigning during the past several decades meant that "Gradually, a powerful international norm developed, stigmatising the use of nuclear weapons as morally unacceptable. This norm has become known as 'the nuclear taboo'".

The Norwegian Nobel Committee said the historical witnesses had helped to generate and consolidate

widespread opposition to nuclear weapons around the world by drawing on personal stories, creating educational campaigns based on their own experience, and issuing urgent warnings against the spread and use of nuclear weapons.

"The Hibakusha help us to describe the indescribable, to think the unthinkable, and to

*Continued on P.2*

*Nidon Hidankyo representatives greet wellwishers at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in Oslo in December.*

## It's 2025

KPC wishes all our members and supporters a Happy New Year as we look forward with hope to a realisation among world leaders that diplomacy is the only meaningful route to settling disputes and bringing peace. This edition of *KP News* has attempted to find some positive messages to lighten the usual diet of gloom. And we continue to call for an end to the war in Ukraine and the ceaseless slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.



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somehow grasp the incomprehensible pain and suffering caused by nuclear weapons.”

The Committee added: “It is therefore alarming that today this taboo against the use of nuclear weapons is under pressure. The nuclear powers are modernising and upgrading their arsenals; new countries appear to be preparing to acquire nuclear weapons; and threats are being made to use nuclear weapons in ongoing warfare.” The Peace Prize ceremony was held in Oslo City Hall in the presence of King Harald V and members of the Norwegian Royal family. Nihon Hidankyo was represented by its co-chairs Terumi Tanaka, Shigemitsu Tanaka and Toshiyuki Mimaki.

During his speech introducing this year’s

recipients Norwegian Nobel Committee chair Jørgen Watne Frydnes said:

“In the committee room of the Norwegian Nobel Institute, here in Oslo, hang the portraits of every Nobel Peace Prize laureate since 1901. Two of the portraits are of Ales Bialiatski and Narges Mohammadi who received their prizes in 2022 and 2023, respectively. Both are serving long prison sentences for their peaceful advocacy of human rights – the very work that earned them the Nobel Peace Prize. The Norwegian Nobel Committee calls upon the Iranian and Belarusian authorities to release them immediately, permanently and unconditionally.”

## Peace is too ‘political’ for some

Following another well-attended Hiroshima commemoration on Kingston Riverside last August KPC wrote to the Mayor of Kingston, not only thanking her for attending the event, but passing on an invitation from the Mayor of Hiroshima for Kingston to join the international organisation Mayors for Peace.

This is an organisation, created in 1982, seeking support for the promotion of peace from municipal authorities across the globe. At present almost 8,500 municipalities are members.

Sadly, Kingston’s Mayor has declined to join this global movement. A response to the invitation stated: “In Kingston, the role of the Mayor is a Civic one, the Mayor being a politically neutral figurehead of the borough.” And it continued: “I am afraid that, unlike politically elected mayors, our Mayor is unable to support political campaigns and must therefore politely decline the Mayor of Hiroshima’s invitation.”

### **Test this assertion**

KPC decided to test this assertion by checking through the 86 UK councils who are currently signed up members of Mayors for Peace. We discovered the following:

only seven of those 86 municipal authorities have directly elected, i.e. politically-elected, mayors. All the remainder are appointed, politically neutral post holders of the same status as the mayor of Kingston upon Thames.

### **Ironically**

The political affiliation of the councils who have joined Mayors for Peace is also instructive. The majority, 36 in number, are Labour-controlled. The remainder cover councils where the administration is run by Conservatives, SNP, Green, Plaid Cymru, Sinn Fein, Independent, have No Overall Control, or, as with the case of Kingston upon Thames, are Liberal Democrat. Ironically, of the seven Lib Dem controlled councils that have joined Mayors for Peace, one is the other Kingston, Kingston upon Hull.

Clearly this wide range of local community representatives do not believe that peace is a “political” issue.

**Kingston Peace Council/CND’s AGM will take place on Tuesday 11 February. This in-person meeting will be held at Kingston Quaker Centre starting at 7pm. See panel on Page 8 for further info.**



## Rest in Peace Jimmy Carter

It was the *Daily Telegraph* - of all newspapers- that summed it up best of all.

“The president for peace dies at 100” was how it reported the passing of Jimmy Carter as 2024 was coming to a close.

The one-term American leader who steered through a Middle East peace deal - that lasts to this day - and who won the Nobel Peace Prize for his tireless efforts both in and out of office to promote understanding, diplomacy and decency, stands as a shining example that the current crop of prime ministers and presidents can never hope to emulate.

This did not of course prevent them from waxing lyrically about him when his death was announced. To Sir Keir Starmer Carter would be remembered for the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel and “it was that lifelong dedication to peace that saw him receive the Nobel Peace Prize.”

President Macron said Carter had been “a steadfast advocate for the rights of the most vulnerable and had tirelessly fought for peace.”

Australian premier Anthony Albanese said: “Jimmy Carter’s legacy is best measured in lives changed, saved and uplifted.”

### **Moral Clarity**

And President Biden, whose endless supply of American weaponry has enabled war to continue in Ukraine and genocide to continue in Gaza, spoke of Carter’s compassion and moral clarity in his work to “forge peace, advance civil rights and human rights.”

China on the other hand offered its condolences pointing out that it was Carter who was the “driving force” behind the diplomatic ties between their two countries. The Carter White House formally established diplomatic relations with China in 1979.

In 2007 he joined forces with Nelson Mandela to launch The Elders, a group of like-minded former leaders dedicated to the causes of peace and human rights.

*Continued overleaf*

And just consider what Carter said when he spoke at the 2002 Nobel Peace prize ceremony in Oslo and how his words then prefigure what is happening now in Gaza and the West Bank.

He told his audience: “In order for us human beings to commit ourselves personally to the inhumanity of war, we find it necessary to dehumanise our opponents, which is in itself a violation of the beliefs of all religions.”

And he went on: “we will not learn to live together in peace by killing each other’s children.”

Having left office in 1980 he went on to create The Carter Centre much of whose work was focussed on the poorest villages in Africa.

### **Share excessive wealth**

“Tragically,” he told his Oslo audience, “in the industrialised world, there is a terrible absence of understanding or concern about those who are enduring lives of despair and hopelessness. We have not yet made the commitment to share with others an appreciable part of our excessive wealth. This is a potentially rewarding burden that we should all be willing to assume.”

He concluded his remarks thus: “The bond of our common humanity is stronger than the divisiveness of our fears and prejudices. God gives us the capacity for choice. We can choose to alleviate suffering. We can choose to work together for peace. We can make these changes and we must.”

### **Forever belong to the heavens**

There is a final dimension to this honest, decent man that will never be equalled by any of his successors. Half way through his presidency NASA launched the Voyager 1 probe on a mission to travel into deep space gathering data about the universe. The probe carried images, sound recordings and scientific information about humans in case it was ever intercepted by an alien intelligence. It also carried a message from President Jimmy Carter.

“We hope someday,” read the message, “having solved the problems we face, to join a community of galactic civilisations. This record represents our hope and our determination, and our goodwill in a vast and awesome universe.”

Voyager 1 is currently 15.5 billion miles from Earth, and still travelling with the 39th President’s message to the Cosmos. It is the most distant human-made object in history ensuring, said NASA director Bill Nelson, that Carter’s words will forever belong to the heavens.

*Image of Jimmy Carter courtesy of The Carter Centre*

## **Starmer peacemaker?**

Should we be sceptical that a British Prime Minister who is unable to utter the word ‘genocide’ in reference to what is clearly happening in Gaza, and whose Government is, in the considered view of widespread legal opinion, complicit in supporting that genocide, is now determined to take the international lead in promoting a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians?

A handful of news outlets reported in late December that Starmer was “inspired by Northern Ireland to launch a project in Israel-Gaza.”

Inspired, we are told, by his previous work as a human rights advisor to the Northern Ireland

Policing Board from 2003 to 2007, he has now “taken the lead in a new initiative that aims to bring long term peace” to Israel.

He has called for a New Year conference in London to revive the work of the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace (IFP) which is backed by the The Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP) - a network of over 160 organisations engaged in civil society peacebuilding between Israelis and Palestinians.

An initial meeting will be hosted by Foreign Secretary David Lammy who, readers will recall, denied that Israel was committing genocide in Gaza because he believed a charge of genocide needed far more deaths to be involved.

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# Plain for all to see

Political activists Led by Donkeys unveiled a banner in Parliament Square just before Christmas that could not be ignored by Keir Starmer's government.

The massive message was put in place just as Starmer and most of the Cabinet attended a Labour Friends of Israel lunch where the Prime Minister again doubled down on his party, and Government's, unwavering support for Israel despite its ongoing slaughter of men, women and, especially, children in Gaza.

Commenting on the Led by Donkeys' banner Israeli Holocaust Studies professor Amos Goldberg said: "For nearly 30 years I have researched and taught the Holocaust, genocide and state violence. And what I want to tell whoever is willing to listen is that what's happening now in Gaza is genocide."

## You cannot remain silent

He went on: "If you read Raphael Lemkin – the Jewish-Polish legal scholar who coined the term 'genocide' and was the major driving force behind the 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention – what is happening in Gaza now is exactly what he had in mind when he spoke about genocide. And once you come to this conclusion you cannot remain silent."

While Starmer, Foreign Secretary David Lammy and other senior government figures continue to look the other way in the face of the blindingly obvious, a clear majority of the British people believe Israel is committing war crimes and that the UK should ban all arms sales to the country. An October survey found that 71% felt that it was fair to label Israel's actions as 'genocide.' In another poll, 60% felt that Israel's military action had gone too far.



At the same time as the Led by Donkeys action Amnesty International published a detailed report accusing Israel of committing genocide, adding: "States that continue to transfer arms to Israel at this time must know that they are violating their obligation to prevent genocide and are at risk of becoming complicit." If only our Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary were legally qualified! Oh, wait a minute ...

## Analysis shows

Well, if they based their decisions on what the British media was reporting no wonder they are quite relaxed at ignoring/denying the genocide that is taking place.

Analysis by the website Declassified UK shows that while CNN, Reuters, Al Jazeera and the *Jerusalem Post* covered statements by UN Special Rapporteurs referring to a "genocide in the making" as far back as November 2023 the BBC and mainstream UK newspapers, including *The Guardian*, has either ignored this completely or given only a scant mention buried in larger stories about the Israeli Defence Force.

## Starmer peacemaker?

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Thus far, there has been little, if any, media comment on this proposal for a peace initiative, nor any speculation why, apart from Labour's, and Starmer's ever diminishing poll ratings, this emphasis on peace for Gaza should suddenly be on the table.

Are Government lawyers (and we don't mean Starmer, Lammy *et al*) giving behind the scenes

warnings that not only the Labour Party but also individual ministers, MPs, and civil servants could actually be held to be complicit in the starvation and ongoing slaughter of Palestinians so they had better be seen to be doing something tangible to promote peace? We will watch with great interest to see what develops next.

KPC members joined more than a hundred others to support a Concert for Peace held at St James's Church, Piccadilly in November. The Musicians for Peace and Disarmament Chamber Orchestra was conducted by Dame Jane Glover for a lively concert that featured two exhilarating pieces by Mendelssohn – his Hebrides Overture and the 4<sup>th</sup> (Italian) Symphony - and, between these works, Benjamin Britten's Serenade for tenor, horn and strings, Opus 31. This musical setting for six poems on the theme of night, was performed



by tenor Toby Spence accompanied by horn player Ben Goldscheider.

MPD is supported by some of the world's most talented and prestigious musicians. Dame Jane is music director of Chicago's Music of the Baroque and a former director of opera at the Royal Academy of Music. Toby Spence has sung at the Royal Opera House, the Metropolitan Opera in New York, Opera National de Paris and the Vienna State Opera, among many others. Ben Goldscheider is principal horn at Daniel Barenboim's West-Eastern Divan Orchestra and holds a professorship at the Royal Conservatory in Antwerp.

Since its founding in 1983, MPD, originally known as Musicians Against Nuclear Arms, has raised almost £100,000 for organisations within the peace movement.

During the interval at the November concert Kate Hudson, in what was one of her final appearances before stepping down as general secretary of CND, spoke of the ongoing tragedy of the Ukraine War and the Israeli genocide against the Palestinians.

Further details of MPD concerts can be found at <https://mpdconcerts.org/>

## Why are Britain's military leaders obsessed by going to war with Russia?

In a recent *Guardian* article retired general Sir Richard Shirreff, a former deputy head of NATO, claimed Britain was "failing to prepare itself for war with Russia" while the UK's top military figure Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, keeps singing from the same hymn sheet describing a "new nuclear age" and "wild threats" from Russia. He manages to include China and North Korea as well!

*The Daily Express* meanwhile was horrified around Christmas that "cuts were forcing HMS Queen Elizabeth out of action" noting that the aircraft carrier could not be deployed "if we were attacked by a hostile power like Russia."

Clearly, and not unexpectedly, the military top brass and the jingoistic right-wing media will always be banging on about ever more expenditure on the armed forces so as to bolster the UK's "global presence"; a hang up from the loss of the British Empire from which the

Establishment has never come to terms.

But, sadly, in Sir Keir Starmer's Labour Government, the rearmament hawks have found a more than sympathetic ear.

Despite the mantra of a £22 billion - or is it £40 billion black hole - Starmer can still promise to send £3 billion a year to Ukraine "for as long as it takes" to defeat Russia. Meanwhile all informed opinion here and in the US admits that Russia is winning its illegal war hands down and that diplomatic efforts to secure peace would be the saner way forward.

But, instead, now we have a clear view of how our Government intends to boost the military/industrial complex. Defence Secretary John Healey told UK businesses in November that "national security is the foundation of growth" with Labour planning to "prioritise arms firms" for Government investment "in every region and nation" in the UK.

# Concerns raised over crackdown on peaceful protest

Britain leads the world in cracking down on climate activism, *The Guardian* reported towards the end of last year. Research by the University of Bristol has shown that UK police arrest environmental protesters at nearly three times the global average rate.

The statistics have come to light as concern has been raised by both climate activists and peace campaigners at the increasing use of draconian legislation to raid their homes, charge them with offences and then sentence them to heavy terms of imprisonment.

“There is increasing criminalisation and repression of climate and environmental protest,” said Oscar Berglund, a political economist at Bristol University.

Speaking on Byline TV, lawyer Tim Crosland, who has represented Extinction Rebellion and Palestine Action activists, said that Britain had a long, proud history of civil disobedience but, after concerted lobbying by vested interests, particularly from the fossil fuel industry, this had changed.

Former Home Secretary Suella Braverman had started using secondary legislation (i.e. legislation that is not discussed and voted on by Parliament) to toughen and broaden laws that could be used against protesters. This had been ruled unlawful by the High Court but the incoming Labour Government had not, as hoped, moved away from the tough, anti-protest stance adopted by their Tory predecessors.

They had, said Crosland, accepted a report from the ‘independent adviser on political violence and disruption’ Lord Walney (appointed by the Tories) which suggested organisations Just Stop Oil and Palestine Action should be treated as though they were engaged in organised crime.

## Defend our Juries

Crosland is also active in the group Defend Our Juries that campaigns against the withholding of information from juries in certain trials. This followed defendants being banned from using certain words, including ‘climate change’ in court to explain the reasons behind their non-violent protests.

Crosland commented on the furore in the mainstream media when a *Daily Telegraph* journalist Allison Pearson was visited by police investigating whether she was guilty of a hate-

related crime. He contrasted this with the almost total mainstream media blackout when the homes of a number of social media pro-Palestinian journalists had been raided and their electronic equipment seized under the provisions of the Terrorism Act. None of the journalists subject to these raids have yet been charged with any offence.

## Raising concerns

Human Rights Watch has called on the Government to repeal the repressive provisions of the Terrorism Act noting that “the definition of the encouragement of terrorism offense is overly broad, raising serious concerns about undue infringement on free speech.” Of particular interest at this time will be Court of Appeal hearings on January 29 and 30 for 16 climate activists serving a combined total of 41 years imprisonment. Four separate cases are involved, including ten people who either planned or actually blocked the M25 calling for a halt to new oil and gas licences; two people who threw paint at Van Gogh’s painting *Sunflowers* at the National Gallery; and four who occupied tunnels dug under the road leading to an oil terminal in Thurrock.

Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth will be supporting the Appeal Court hearings.

Jack Robirosa, legal counsel for Greenpeace UK, said: “The last government’s draconian laws have led to a situation where conscientious people are getting five years in prison for discussing a planned peaceful protest. This is not the sort of thing most people associate with an established democracy with respect for civil rights and a healthy culture of protest and free speech. Is the UK still the kind of country that remembers how important protest was in giving us our rights and freedoms? Or are we drifting towards the authoritarian police states we have traditionally distanced ourselves from?”

For Friends of the Earth senior lawyer Katie de Kauwe said: “In what functioning democracy can it be right for those peacefully raising the alarm about the climate crisis to receive longer jail sentences than people who participated in racially-motivated violence [last] summer, and deliberately targeted migrants, refugees and Muslim communities? Peaceful protesters shouldn’t be locked up.Period.”

**Footnote: A few days before Christmas the police shut down an interfaith, pro-Palestinian carol service in Parliament Square attended by Christian, Jewish and Muslim worshipers. They have so far failed to give an adequate explanation as to why.**

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Our regular stall in Kingston  
Market Place is held on the  
first and third Saturday of  
each month. If you wish to  
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Want to try your hand at  
editing our newsletter? We  
currently have three  
volunteer editors who take it  
in turns. Or are you a dab  
hand at web management?  
Contact Phil Cooper (details  
in the blue panel above).

**DIARY DATES**

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> January**

London CND Annual Conference. Online. Trump in the White House, NATO, war, nukes... what should we expect?, features speakers including CND General Secretary Sophie Bolt, Peter Burt from Drone Wars UK, China Specialist Keith Bennet, and the Green Party's Jenny Jones.

Register via the website: <https://www.londoncnd.org/>

**Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> January**

US Spy Drones out of RAF Fairford – Online. Drone Wars, together with Oxfordshire Peace Campaign and CND, will host an online public meeting and in-person demonstration later in January to oppose flights of US Global Hawk and Reaper drones from RAF Fairford in Glos. Register for this online event at <https://cnduk.org/events/us-spy-drones-out-of-fairford-online-event/> Demo at RAF Fairford: Saturday 25th January, 1pm, Main Gate.

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> January**

End the Genocide in Gaza. National Demonstration for Palestine. 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. Assemble 12noon Outside the BBC, Portland Place.

Weblink: <https://cnduk.org/events/end-the-genocide-in-gaza-national-demonstration-for-palestine-2/>

**On till Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> January**

Peter Kennard: Archive of Dissent. Retrospective show of the photomontage work by the celebrated peace campaigning artist. Whitechapel Gallery, 77-82 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. Free entry (closed Mondays).

**Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> February**

Stop the War AGM. Online. 12pm to 4pm. This is where the policies of the coalition are discussed and decided for the next year. All Stop the War members, along with delegates from local groups and affiliates, are entitled to attend and vote. Given the current situation in Ukraine and the ongoing genocide in Gaza, it is vital that the anti-war movement comes together to agree a way forward.

Delegates must be registered by **Friday 31 January**.

<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/stophewarcoalition/1493203>

**Kingston Peace Council/CND AGM**

**Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> February 7pm to 9pm**

This will be an in-person meeting at Kingston Quaker Centre,  
Fairfield East, Kingston upon Thames KT1 2PT.

Members are elected at the AGM to take on particular responsibilities and we welcome new people to help run the group. We do not hold formal committee meetings, but communicate with each other by telephone, email, or Zoom.

At present members take turns in the roles of Chairperson and Secretary, so if you feel able to assist with one of these positions, or in any other way, please put your name forward - you do not have to wait for someone to nominate you.

If you wish to make a nomination for the committee or volunteer to help in any other way, or if there is a topic that you would like to be raised at the AGM, please contact Gill (details in blue panel on this page) or Hilary (020 8898 4850 or email [hilarymevans@btinternet.com](mailto:hilarymevans@btinternet.com)).