



FARINGDON PEACE GROUP

NEWSLETTER 26

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2022

STOP THE WAR

The war in Ukraine grinds on as Russian forces continue to make advances in the Donetsk region and Ukraine launches a counter offensive in Kherson. The war is already in its seventh month with no end in sight. Day in day out there is more shelling and bombing, with hundreds of casualties on both sides.

Meanwhile, the UK and their NATO allies continue to provide billions of pounds worth of weapons to Ukraine and make no attempts to find a peace proposal - exacerbating the already critical situation.

The tremors of the war are also being felt throughout the global economy. The disruptions in the production and trade of essential commodities like food, fuel and fertilizers is fuelling a cost-of-living crisis like never before. While energy and food bills soar across the board, it is projected that most ordinary workers are all expected to take pay cuts during these dire times.

As anti-war activists, we must challenge these ideas and policies by opposing the drive to war and bringing the focus back to tackling international disputes peacefully. We can only do this if you support our work.

Our own government seems to always have a magic money tree to pump more cash into the military machine but none to help its own people during a crisis.

FUTURE EVENTS

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

13th November

White Poppy wreath laying

WOMEN IN BLACK

Vigil for Bethlehem December 6th or 15th.

Date/time TBC.

Men welcome in support

DID YOU HEAR?

From Greenpeace

The government failed at getting the worst parts of their Policing Bill through Parliament. So now they've brought them back under a new name - the Public Order Bill. This would increase stop and search powers, clamp down on protest and be a threat to people's right to protest and freedom to gather together to demand change. We beat them once - can you add your name and help us beat them again?

For the link to sign a petition, go to
<https://act.gp/3NpV1VH>

PEACE GROUP MONTHLY MEETING

WEDNESDAY 2nd NOVEMBER at 7.30pm
via Zoom

GREENHAM WOMEN EVERYWHERE....SAVE THE DATE!

A celebration of the day when over 30,000 women surrounded the Greenham Common airbase near Newbury in 1982 to protest against the arrival of US Cruise missiles
See you there!

<https://facebook.com/events/s/awea-anarchic-women-embrace-al/889150202045459/>

Join us at any point during the monthly Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp from Friday 9th - Sunday 11th December 2022 in resistance against UK nuclear weapons at AWE Aldermaston.



OUTRAGE AS ITALY ORDERED TO PAY OUT MILLIONS TO OIL INVESTOR OVER ENERGY CHARTER TREATY CLAIM

A tribunal authorised by the Energy Charter Treaty has ordered Italy to pay a UK fossil fuel company over £210 million, after Rockhopper sued the country over its ban on offshore oil drilling – six times more than the company’s actual investment in the drilling project.

This treaty allows them to sue governments in “corporate courts” - private, closed-door tribunals outside of the national legal system. Fossil fuel companies are making obscene profits during the cost of living crisis and now they want to cash in even more when governments actually take action to limit the destructive projects driving the climate crisis – with taxpayers bearing the cost.

This case will have a chilling effect on climate action, as climate scientists have warned in the most recent IPCC report. It also bankrolls Rockhopper to pursue ever more destructive projects: its share price has jumped up following the verdict.

The UK government and other member countries of the ECT have been discussing changes to “modernise” the treaty. But the current proposals would keep fossil fuel projects protected for ten more years.

We need to be cancelling climate-bomb fossil fuel projects without delay.

The UK and countries across Europe must exit the Energy Charter Treaty in a coordinated withdrawal and put an end to the huge risk they face of being sued.

Join CAAT’s campaign to tell the UK Government to stop corporate courts.

We need to get the word out: staying in this little-known, shadowy investment treaty is locking in the risk of destructive companies blocking the transition away from fossil fuels.

Worth noting:

- The huge sum that Rockhopper receives in compensation is almost nine times more than its initial investment
- The ECT allows the oil giant to sue for the loss of future profit, not just money actually spent
- Other oil and gas producing countries in Europe could face similar compensation claims in future

CAAT CALLS FOR UK TO END ARMS SALES AND MILITARY SUPPORT FOR ISRAELI FORCES FOLLOWING GAZA KILLINGS

UK has licenced £442 million worth of arms to Israel since 2015

UK arms implicated in previous atrocities against Palestine

44 Palestinians reportedly killed by air strikes

Campaign Against Arms Trade has called on the UK government to condemn the abuses inflicted by Israeli forces over recent days, including air strikes that have killed 44 Palestinians, including 15 children, and injured over 300 people.

The airstrikes are the latest round of brutal bombardments of the Gaza strip. It follows the killing of 260 Palestinians in the Israeli attacks on Gaza between 10th May and 21st May 2021. Over a quarter of those killed were children. Following those attacks in May 2021, 78 MPs called for an investigation to determine whether UK-made arms and components had been used in the violence, and for a suspension of UK arms sales to Israel until such an investigation had been completed.

Since the Conservative government was elected in May 2015 the UK has licenced over £442 million worth of arms to Israeli forces, including:

- **£183 million worth of ML22 licences (military technology)**
- **£117 million worth of ML10 licences (aircraft, helicopters, drones)**
- **£22 million worth of ML4 licences (grenades, bombs, missiles, countermeasures)**
- **£4.6 million worth of ML6 licences (armoured vehicles, tanks)**
- **£1.9 million worth of ML3 licences (ammunition)**
- **£1.1 million worth of ML1 licences (small arms)**

The actual level of exports will be significantly higher, as there have also been 47 Open Licences in this period. These are mainly for aircraft equipment. Open Licences allow for an unlimited quantity and value of exports.

Kate Fallon of Campaign Against Arms Trade said: “The people of the besieged Gaza Strip have suffered years of injustice and bloodshed at the hands of Israeli forces, and supported by governments like the UK through arms sales.

60 YEARS ON FROM CUBA WE HAVE NOT ESCAPED THE NUCLEAR WEAPON NIGHTMARE

Sixty years ago this month and having only recently joined my first submarine HMS Auriga, I found myself loading fully armed torpedoes in a scramble to sail on war patrol for reasons history now recalls as the Cuban Missile Crisis. Aged 23 and full of youthful exuberance I thought this was very exciting and exactly what I had joined for. Perhaps just as well for my peace of mind, I was also blissfully ignorant of the fact that, while we were describing underwater circles in mid Atlantic trying to detect our Soviet equivalents heading south from the Iceland-Faroes Gap, the rest of the world was facing possible nuclear Armageddon.

It was only later that the harsh facts as to how close we had come to that Armageddon emerged with the stark reality of what nuclear war might have meant. It took until 2002 and a 40th anniversary meeting between the three protagonists – Cuba, USA & USSR - that the real reasons it was peacefully resolved became known. The common factor was rational thinking by rational people. Khrushchev had sent missiles to Cuba in direct response to Kennedy having stationed missiles in Turkey. Both of them feared that this politically driven act of nuclear weapon 'show boating' by Khrushchev might cause an accidental exchange through some unforeseen and uncontrollable incident. Behind the scenes they secretly negotiated while tensions rapidly rose on the ground and, less visibly, in the four Soviet submarines submerged off Cuba.

In return for Kennedy agreeing to withdraw his missiles from Turkey, Khrushchev agreed to withdraw his from Cuba. The deal was that the US withdrawal would remain secret – as it largely did until 2002. Rational thinking had prevailed, albeit the world at large thought Khrushchev had been forced to back off by nuclear force. But, while all this was being put in place, underwater the very unforeseen act both leaders feared came close to starting a nuclear war. A US warship had detected one of the Soviet submarines and dropped some underwater charges to 'persuade' it to surface. The submarine captain interpreted this as a hostile act justifying the firing of one of his nuclear tipped torpedoes. Fortunately a cooler head and more rational thinker was onboard. In addition to the captain and political officer (both of whose authorisation was needed), Flotilla

Commander, Vasili Archipov's approval was also needed to fire the 'special weapon'. Recognising the horrific implications of firing a nuclear weapon, he would not give his permission.

The others finally accepted that they could not fire and the captain surfaced his submarine. Archipov is generally credited with having saved the world.

Sixty years later, having avoided a strategic nuclear war and dodged some 14 nuclear near misses since, the world is facing the all too real threat of President Putin unleashing tactical nuclear war. This time though there is a big difference. Putin shows no sign of the implied rational thinking behind defensive nuclear deterrence that supports the concept of Mutually Assured Destruction. Putin has demonstrated that, in his hands, nuclear weapons are not defensive but offensive weapons and his threats have been directed at deterring NATO from more direct action in conventional warfare which, incidentally, may well encourage other States to acquire them for similar reasons.

So where does NATO stand now and what should it do? To threaten and then possibly launch a retaliatory nuclear strike against Russia would result in further, escalating, nuclear exchanges which NATO cannot seriously contemplate initiating unless prepared to turn Europe into a wasteland. So all the \$/£Bns spent on nuclear deterrence are shown to be ineffectual when faced with the leader of a State who does not play by the established rule book. This makes it crystal clear that the rule book is - and always has been - deeply flawed. The fact that there has been no nuclear war since 1945 is no proof that one could not occur. The only way to avoid a nuclear war is by the total elimination of nuclear weapons as required by the UN Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Once it is clear, as surely it must be in the end, that Russia's invasion of Ukraine has failed, Russia will need to integrate back into the rest of the world. This will be the time for the west to take a bold and imaginative step forward on disarmament in a way that encourages Russia – probably and hopefully under new leadership – to engage in disarmament negotiations and this, in turn, will encourage China to join in.

continuation →

continuation

Firstly - recognising that the presence of nuclear weapons based in Europe exacerbates rather than resolves conflict, the US should withdraw all of theirs retaining only its US based strategic strike missiles just for the period of negotiations.

Secondly, NATO should immediately and unconditionally declare a policy of No First Use and Sole Use as proposed by states and organisations at the recent UN NPT review. If nuclear weapons are supposed to be a 'last resort' then at least give meaning to the phrase.

Thirdly, the UK and France should disband their respective nuclear forces as part of the negotiations.

Lastly, negotiations should be conducted with respect towards Russian dignity and not as winner's reparations. One of the main political drivers towards the war in Ukraine has been a failure by the west to support post-Soviet Russia integrating back into the world from which it has become totally isolated. We should not risk giving an extreme right wing leader the opportunity to replace Putin.

All of this will require courage by State leaders. But they should not be afraid to follow in the footsteps of former US Defence Secretary William (Bill) Perry who now actively promotes the elimination of nuclear weapons by all means and as swiftly as possible.

Thank you to Robert Forsyth, who you may remember spoke at a Peace Group Meeting.

QUAKERS PUT PRIORITIES TO NEW PM

Quakers in Britain have written to new Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, urging him to focus on climate, cost-of-living, peace, and truth.

Acknowledging Sunak's pledges on climate and cost-of-living, Quakers in Britain pressed him to do more to bring about a just transition away from fossil fuels. This includes making polluters pay to support communities and countries worst affected by climate breakdown.

Quakers asked Sunak to work towards peace in Ukraine and around the world. This includes taking part in negotiations in good faith towards a world without nuclear weapons.

When Sunak resigned as Chancellor, he emphasised the importance of truth and the need for government to be conducted "properly, competently and seriously". On becoming Prime Minister, he promised to serve with integrity. Quakers have now asked him to take steps to foster these values. This includes reappointing an ethics adviser to the Prime Minister as he pledged to do during his leadership campaign earlier this year.

Paul Parker, Recording Clerk for Quakers in Britain said: "We ask Rishi Sunak to bring about fair and sustainable solutions to the most pressing issues affecting our country, people and planet. There is no more time to waste. As Quakers, we seek to uphold the Prime Minister and other political leaders, and work with them to bring about positive change."

PLEASE NOTE

I know many of us write to our MP via petitions from organisations that we consider important, not just to ourselves but also concerning issues and people that we hold dear.

I accept that our MP is busy, but please bear in mind the following, received from David Johnstone MP.

"Please note whilst I try to respond to every email I receive, I prioritise the emails of constituents who are in urgent need over campaign 'email your MP' emails that are generated by campaign websites. In addition, please bear in mind I do not routinely reply to emails I am cc'd into or emails that are abusive".

I should add, that since I got this reply, he *has* replied to precisely this sort of email! (*Jenny*)



It's a disaster- there's no river to pump sewage into

LEVELLING UP

They're all on the up

Inflation, Interest rates, National Debt, Poverty, Hospital waiting times, Food banks, the gap between rich and poor