



FARINGDON

PEACE GROUP

NEWSLETTER 28 **MARCH-APRIL 2023**

ONE STEP FORWARD ...

Pleased to announce that Faringdon takes its place among the nearly 30 towns and cities in the UK to have declared themselves in support of the UN Treaty opposing nuclear weapons.

You can find the list on the International Campaign against Nuclear Weapons website: https://cities.icanw.org/list_of_cities

and they even managed to spell Faringdon right!

AND ONE STEP BACK

A northbound nuclear warhead convoy travelling from AWE Burghfield passed through Oxfordshire on the morning of 14th February. The convoy stopped in a layby on the A34 near Abingdon for a time, the reason unknown at the moment.

The photo shows a nuclear warhead carrier vehicle in the convoy.

Nukewatchers are monitoring and tracking this convoy as it heads north across Britain, passing close to towns and cities, schools, hospitals and many communities.

This is the most dangerous cargo on our roads.



The next newsletter will be for May. Please do send your contributions by the last week in April. jennyridd@yahoo.co.uk

FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT **27th February – 12th March 2023**

The message of this year's Fairtrade Fortnight is simple: making the small switch to Fairtrade supports producers in protecting the future of the planet and some of our most-loved foods like coffee, bananas and chocolate. Climate change is making these crops harder and harder to grow, threatening farmers' livelihoods and whole communities.

If we buy Fairtrade foods, the farmers can use their Fairtrade premium to take steps to mitigate against the worst effects of climate change. This often involves planting more trees, using organic methods and harvesting rainwater, all of which help the farmer and the planet.

Coffee, bananas and cocoa are grown a very long way from Faringdon, but we can all be part of the story through our buying choices

Look for the Fairtrade mark in your favourite supermarket or visit the Mustard Seed for the widest range of Fairtrade foods and crafts in Faringdon. Special offer for Fairtrade Fortnight: Spend over £20 and receive a FREE Mustard Seed jute bag!

Come and visit our Fairtrade stall under the Old Town Hall during the Farmers Market on Tuesday 7th March.

You can get involved in Fairtrade Fortnight <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/get-involved/current-campaigns/fairtrade-fortnight/>

PENNY WIXEY

We are very sorry to hear of the death of one of our most dedicated supporters, Penny Wixey.

There will be more about Penny in the next Newsletter'.

PEACE GROUP MONTHLY MEETINGS

WEDNESDAY 1st MARCH at 7.30pm via Zoom

The Doomsday Clock and the Possibility of Nuclear War - what can we do?

Speaker: Tom Unterrainer, Chair of CND

You should have received the Zoom link, but if not, please go to the website
and

WEDNESDAY 5th APRIL at 7.30pm

In-person at the Friends Meeting House

Speaker: Ashley Smith from WASP (Windrush Against Sewage Pollution).

FRIDAY 21st APRIL

XR event: 100,000 in London. More details later.

PALESTINE 2022: EYE WITNESS REPORT

ANNE STREET was the speaker at our monthly meeting on 1st February, 2023

The Israel-Palestine conflict is often in the news especially now a new hardline government has recently been installed in Israel causing increased tension and bloodshed. At last, even the USA appears to be concerned, and so it was very opportune to have an eye-witness account of some of the tragedy which is Palestine. Our speaker, Anne Street, spent 3 months with EAPPI (the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel) observing and recording the incidents she witnessed. These were to be sent to the United Nations.

First, a very helpful short video gave us a general outline of the history of the conflict beginning with the encroaching of Israeli settlements onto Palestinian territory. This started in 1948 with the infamous Naqba (catastrophe) when the state of Israel was declared.

Anne's talk centred on Halina, a young woman with two young daughters who ran the family farm more or less single-handedly because her husband works in Israel. He only comes home every two weeks so Halina is virtually on her own, coping with the fact that an Israeli army post is situated nearby. The psychology of the Israeli state is to keep the Palestinians guessing as to their future intentions. There are a myriad ways in which the Israelis make life almost impossible for Palestinians. Will it be tomorrow that the (British-supplied) bulldozers arrive to destroy their homes, or will it be next month, or next year? Will it be the olive orchards, or maybe the school, that is targeted? They can declare an archaeological site on Palestinian land as a reason to occupy Palestinian land. In 1986, an ancient synagogue was excavated and used as an excuse to evict the whole village. Perhaps a nature reserve, or military training ground is used as a so-called reason to move the Palestinians on. Israelis keep sheep and set them free on the Palestinian olive groves to eat the young trees that have been planted there.

Anything to evict the Palestinians from their own land. They are severely restricted as to where they can travel, for instance they can only go to the Dead Sea at certain times, and there are 642 check points across the West Bank.

They even refuse to give back prisoners to their families, even when they are dead

So how do the Palestinians remain positive in the light of all these almost insurmountable difficulties? They have hope that even if they don't see a resolution of the situation themselves, at least their children will. As Anne pointed out, there are examples of ex-members of the Israeli Defence Force very active in supporting Palestinians. Members of our Peace Group will remember from our visit to the West Bank 2009 the Israeli Women In Black who demonstrate every Friday on a roundabout in the centre of Jerusalem to 'End the Occupation'. Palestinians are not alone.

Phil and Jennie

PS Anne urged us to write to our MP in support of Palestinians

SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINE

Up to 50 people gathered in the Market Place in Faringdon on 24th February to mark the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Members of Faringdon Peace Group and local people were joined by around 20 Ukrainian refugees who have made their homes in Faringdon during the last year. There were moving speeches, poems and songs in English and Ukrainian. Al Cane held everything together with his words and music. We held hands in a circle to observe a minutes silence when we were left with our own thoughts about the war and its victims. Many of us in the peace group will have very different views on why the war started and how it may be brought to an end, compared to most of the Ukrainians here, who are very grateful for all the weapons – or 'lethal aid' as our MP David Johnston calls it - that we are pouring into their country. But on this solemn day we put our differences aside and stood in solidarity with the people of Ukraine wherever they are.

We collected £85 for the Red Cross Ukraine crisis appeal.

Karen



Thank you to Al Cane for the pictures

PEACE PLAQUE

an update from Karen

Some of you might have memories going back far enough to when the idea of a Peace Plaque in the town was first mooted. After many years of stop/start it now has fresh momentum and will hopefully be made and installed this year!

In 2015 FPG won an award from the Movement for the Abolition of War which we agreed to put towards a permanent (but removable to keep the planners happy!) artwork promoting peace and justice in the centre of the town where everyone can benefit from its positive message.

Sue Drew, a local artist, drew up a design for a circular ceramic plaque and we explored various locations in the centre of town. Many sites were rejected but the Conservation Officer and the Town Council unanimously approved a location on the side wall of the Corn Exchange on Gloucester Street, near the side door to the Corn Exchange and Family Centre.

As it is a listed building, we are now going through the process of gaining Listed Building Consent. Hopefully that won't take too long and we will be able to set a date with Sue for the making sometime when the weather is a bit warmer!



OXFAM IN YEMEN

Yemen, the poorest country in the Middle East, has been plagued by conflict for more than six years, which has caused what the United Nations describe as one of the world's largest crises. Deadly ground fighting and airstrikes have killed more than 12,000 civilians and forced over four million people to flee their homes since March 2015.

Oxfam has been operating in Yemen for over 33 years and is currently present in eight governorates where poor communities are located. We work alongside and through local partners in all areas of our response and also to campaign for an end to the conflict and an inclusive peace agreement that takes into account the needs and views of women, youth and civil society. As of April 2021, we have reached more than 4 million people through our program.

Helping people to recover

Our emergency activities focus on providing clean water and sanitation services, helping families make a living and delivering cash to cover their basic food needs. With the arrival of coronavirus, we refocused our work to respond to the pandemic. Across the country, we are training health volunteers to raise awareness of vulnerable communities about the virus and the importance of hygiene and hand washing.

Strong civil society

We work to ensure that civilians are well protected and to strengthen Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Yemen so that people can have a say in decisions that affect them most. We work with civil society organizations across the country to ensure that the voices of Yemeni women and youth are raised and their aspirations for the peace process are heard by powerholders. To this end, we help Yemeni partners participate in global humanitarian fora, so that they can share the aspirations of Yemenis for their future and how they have been affected by the conflict.

Women's Rights & Protection

In Yemen, thousands of women lack access to education, economic opportunities and basic protection. Together with our partners, we

empower women to fulfill their rights. We ensure that the specific needs of women are mainstreamed in all of our humanitarian programmes. In addition, specific projects aim to address protection risks faced by women, support women rights organizations and activists to build their leadership capacity and ensure their voices are heard.

Through our protection program we enable affected communities in several governorates across Yemen to safely access direct protection assistance provided by Oxfam or local partners, as well as supporting women access specialized GBV services, lifesaving response and basic services.

Averting future crises

Yemen is prone to natural disasters such as droughts and flooding. The effects of climate change are increasingly being felt in Yemen, which is one of the most water-scarce countries in the world. Oxfam is working with its affiliates across the globe to highlight the impacts of climate change on Yemenis, advocating for proper attention to alleviate such impacts and help affected communities better adapt to resulting harsh environmental changes.

Campaigning for a lasting peace

Oxfam is doing everything possible to help people get access to food and clean water they need to survive. But that is not enough. The Yemeni people are asking for peace, they must be able to rebuild their lives and live in dignity without fear and devastation caused by the war. Oxfam is mobilizing its global network to advocate with the main powerholders for urgently agreeing on lasting peace that prioritizes the aspirations of Yemen women, men and youth.

TRASH 'N TREASURE GIVEAWAY

Outside many of the houses in Faringdon

SATURDAY 1st APRIL, from 9.30am until everything's gone!

Organised by the churches, but in the interests of recycling and reducing waste especially plastic, anyone can take part - just leave anything you don't want outside your front gate for people to come and take away - free. No money changes hands. If you don't want your own stall or are not in Faringdon, please add to the one outside 19 Coxwell Road and 1 Highworth Road.

Walk round the participating houses, and find something that *you* need. A map will be available.

from **STOP THE WAR**

February marks twenty years since the Stop the War Coalition organised the biggest demonstration in British history against the impending attack on Iraq. The campaign brought together an unprecedented alliance of the peace movement, trade unions, school students, Muslim communities, the radical left and hundreds of thousands of first time protestors, later dubbed 'virgin protestors'

We are asking all our supporters who took part to email in your photos from the day, tweet and share on social media using the hashtag **#Iraq20Years** so that we can re-share them.

On 20th March we are holding an anniversary event marking the date the war broke out (19th) at the Swiss Church in Central London. Hold the date!

We are also participating in the International Peace Bureau's online event to mark the global nature of the protests. Further information and link to join on Stop the War website

NEXT CND ONLINE WORKSHOP

We ran a series of these during the lockdowns and thought they were a useful way of getting together to share expertise and work out how we can be of most support from the office in London, so we'll be running a few more over the next few months.

The next one will be an **introduction to social media**, led by Pádraig McCarrick (CND's Press and Communications Officer)

THURSDAY 30 MARCH 7pm-8pm.

This will be a workshop for all CND groups – if you've never posted a Tweet before and want to, or if you're proficient and full of ideas, we would love to see you all!

More information here - <https://cnduk.org/events/cnd-groups-workshop-introduction-to-social-media/>

Let us know what you would like covered, and then register:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwsd-mvqDouGtaveiOf7cn09TtEcnBeckT9>

PEACE TALKS NOT TANKS

UKRAINE: SUNAK MUST SUPPORT NEGOTIATION NOT ESCALATION

Milan Rae

As we head towards the second year of the horrifying war in Ukraine, the British government should be supporting a rapid, negotiated end to the war.

Prime minister Rishi Sunak should be helping to remove obstacles to peace. This includes pressing Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy to lift his ban on negotiating with Russia while Vladimir Putin remains president

Instead of seeking peace, the British government is supporting the dangerous pursuit of a Ukrainian military 'victory', escalating the war by sending main battle tanks, and digging in for a long war.

The *Financial Times* reported on 19 January: 'some western officials and analysts question how much progress Ukraine will be able to make, even if reinforced with more armour. Although Ukrainian forces overcame thin Russian defences to retake Kharkiv province in the autumn, they made heavy going of liberating Kherson.'

'Their strategy is to let the Russians bleed out,' a European security official told the *FT*, 'but the Ukrainians are bleeding too.'

The same day, former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev warned: 'If a nuclear power loses a conventional war, that could trigger a nuclear war.'

Earlier in January, the British government became the first Western state to promise advanced tanks to the Ukrainian military. A supporter of the move wrote in the *Telegraph* that the Challenger 2 'can fire accurately on the move and at night, critical for "shock action" to get behind Russian defences.'

The motive for sending (just 14) Challenger 2 tanks is believed to be political, to push the German government to authorise the export of its equally-capable Leopard 2 tanks, which exist in large numbers in Europe.

