NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE NETWORK NEWSLETTER

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THE CEASEFIRE ENDS!

The first 6-week stage of the Gaza ceasefire deal between Hamas and Israel ended on March 1. During this stage, as agreed in the deal, Hamas released 25 living hostages and eight hostages' corpses in return for about 1,900 Palestinian prisoners and detainees. Israeli forces withdrew from most of Gaza, except for an area along its south border and the military zone it had constructed across Gaza cutting off the north of Gaza from the south. Israel allowed hundreds of aid lorries into Gaza each day and many thousands of Gazans who had fled from the north of Gaza returned there in spite of its almost total destruction.

According to the ceasefire agreement this first stage was to be followed by two others. In the second, also to be of six weeks, Israeli forces would make a complete withdrawal, and the remaining live hostages in Gaza would be exchanged in stages in tandem with the release of more Palestinian prisoners. Also a permanent ceasefire would be established. The third stage involved the rebuilding of Gaza over several years,

Talks to arrange the carrying out of the second stage were supposed to start on February 4, but didn't till the 17th due to Israeli procrastination. Then, at the talks in Egypt, Israel demanded that, instead of starting the second stage, the first stage should continue with all the remaining hostages returned in exchange for Palestinian prisoners but with no further withdrawal of Israeli troops. This was unacceptable to Hamas as it would mean Israel could renew its war on Gaza, as Netanyahu has all along said it would, without risking hostages'



Cooking a family meal in northern Gaza, March 2025

In lives, thus satisfying the hostage lobby's objections to restarting the war.

On March 2 Israel stopped all aid to Gaza until Hamas accepted its plan for continuing the first stage of the ceasefire deal. A few days later the UK joined Germany and France in claiming that Israel "could be" (it obviously is!) in breach of international law in stopping aid into Gaza. Not that this stops any of the three countries continuing to send arms to Israel.

Also on March 2 a UN report on sexual and gender-based violence in Gaza and the occupied territories amounted to "genocidal acts", citing attacks on maternity wards and other healthcare facilities for women, the destruction of IVF clinics and restrictions on food and medical supplies into Gaza. It also found that the "patterns of sexual violence" Israeli forces used, including rape and sexualised torture constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In its stance Netanyahu was bolstered by Trump who had during a stand off during the first stage of the ceasefire threatened that if *all* remaining hostages were not freed by February 15 "all hell would break loose". However, Israel resumed the agreed first stage phased exchanges without Trump acting on his threat.

Trump had also bolstered the Israeli rightwing's desire for the ethnic cleansing of Gaza by proposing at the same time the removal of all Palestinians from Gaza to Egypt or Jordan so they could "live in peace for a change" while the US took over Gaza and turned it into "the Riviera of the Middle East". This proposal was



People fleeing from northern Gaza as Israeli bombing resumes

On March 23 the Gaza Ministry of Health announced that the figure of 50,000 Palestinians being killed (including 17,400 children) in the Israeli attack on Gaza since October 7 had been passed with the total reaching 50,021 - 1 in 46 of the pre-war population of the territory. It also announced that 113,274 had been injured.

Protests in Israel and in Gaza

Many Israelis, particularly the families of Israeli hostages and their supporters have opposed the war, especially given the threat it poses to the lives of Israeli hostages and also because they claim that the Netanyahu is continuing the war both to avoid being tried on the charges of fraud, breach of trust and bribery he is facing bribes and also to avoid an election in which his continuing unpopularity would likely see his government fall. This has resulted in a continuing series of protests against the war. On March 20 tens of thousands protested against what they called an attack on democracy by

taken seriously and indeed welcomed by the Israeli government with Netanyahu the next day saying that his government was working with the US to implement Trump's plan.

After Egypt and Jordan strongly rejected the plan it was reported on March 14 that the US and Israel had contacted with officials in Sudan, Somalia and Somaliland, a breakaway region of Somalia, to discuss the idea of relocating Gazans to their territories. Sudanese officials reported that they had been approached and had rejected the idea; officials from the other two denied their countries had been approached.

On the night of March 17-18 Israel ended the ceasefire by bombing Gaza, reportedly killing more than 400 Palestinians, including 263 women and children, making it one of the deadliest in the Gaza war. On the 19th ground troops resumed operations in Gaza with reports that the aim was to increase the security barrier around Gaza and ultimately occupy the whole of Gaza. The invasion involved the tactics used in Gaza of ordering Palestinians to leave areas to avoid imminent bombing, and then large-scale bombing with the excuse that Hamas members were present. So Palestinians were being forced to flee yet again.

the government resuming the war to which the majority if Israelis had become opposed. (On March 28 a poll published in the *Times of Israel* fond that 69% of Israelis favoured for an end to the war in exchange for hostages.)

The protests involved actions in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem with key highways blocked including thousands packing streets near Netanyahu's residence in Tel Aviv.

On March 25 hundreds of Palestinians joined protests in Beit Lahiya in northern Gaza, chanting such slogans as "Hamas Out" and "Hamas terrorists" and calling for an end to war with Israel, in what has been described as the largest protest against Hamas inside the territory since the October 7 attacks. Demonstrators also carried banners saying "Stop the War" and "We want to live in peace."

The West Bank

Since Israel occupied it in 1967, Palestinians in the West Bank have suffered increasing repression, with the progressive take over of their land with illegal Jewish-only settlements and more recently bulldozing of their homes and other buildings deemed "illegal" by Israel with the eviction of villages in areas taken over by the Israeli state, physical attacks by settlers and sometimes occupation soldiers on Palestinian, their property, flocks and olive trees.

Since October 7th 2023 these attacks have much increased with



Jenin refugee camp under attack, March 2025

no ceasefire in the West Bank. After the 7th Israel launched a major offensive in the north that forced at least 40,000 people from their homes, the largest displacement since the occupation began in 1967 and involved the killing of dozens, including children.

At the same time Israeli authorities have been constructing new checkpoints and barriers, blocking access to villages and towns, cutting off communities from major roads and even agricultural land

And, on 21 January 2025, during the Gaza ceasefire the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) began a large-scale military operation, "Iron Wall" against Palestinian militants in the West Bank. Israel's operation initially only targeted the Jenin Brigades, a local Palestinian militia in Jenin. On the fourth day, the IDF expanded its operation to Tulkarm and other Palestinian cities and towns. It marked a more aggressive approach against Palestinian West Bank militancy and also the first time that the Palestinian Authority (PA) has directly participated in Israeli military operations.

The IDF has stated that the aims of the operation are to preserve its "freedom of action" in the West Bank, to neutralise militant infrastructure, and to eliminate imminent threats.

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the operation is an action against the "Iranian axis", referring to the Iranian support of West Bank militants, and Israeli far-right finance minister Bezalel Smotrich said it marks the start of a campaign to protect Israeli settlements in the occupied region. Israeli defense minister Israel Katz said it marks a shift in the IDF's security plan in the West Bank and was "the first lesson from the method of repeated raids in Gaza", later clarifying that Israeli forces planned to maintain a long-term military presence in Jenin beyond the raid's conclusion.

Altogether at least 840 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank by Israeli forces and settlers since October 7 according to UN figures, and Al-Jazeera reported on 28th of March that altogether 14,000 Palestinians had been displaced from their West Bank homes since October 7..

Also, with the stopping of aid into Gaza, the banning of the main humanitarian agency in Gaza, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, and the bombing of its premises, malnutrition is increasing and widespread famine is threatened. The Red Cross published an estimate on March 25 2025 that 96% of Gaza's population were undernourished.

Lebanon and Syria

On March 28 Israel carried out an air strike on Beirut for the first time since a truce was signed by Israel and Hezbollah in November. The attack followed a few drones being fired into Israel by Hezbollah. The Israeli military said the target was a Hezbollah military storage facility for drones. An apartment building was flattened with the deaths of 23 people.

On March 12 Israel's defence minister re affirmed Israel's intention to continue to occupy a swath of Syrian territory it invaded after the fall of Bashr al-Assad's government in December.

PALESTINE ACTION (PA) CONTINUES CAMPAIGN

February 3: Overnight, activists from PA Scotland targeted the Glasgow and Edinburgh premises of Biffa Limited. They smashed windows, spray painted "Drop Leonardo" on them and covered the sites in red paint, to symbolise the company's complicity with spilling Palestinian blood. Biffa Ltd dispose of hazardous waste for arms companies Leonardo and Thales, which produce respectively laser targeting systems for Israel's F-35 fighter jets and help produce military drones for Elbit.

February 5: PA targeted the company *Allianz*, with a direct action protest at the company's Milton Keynes office. Activists smashed windows and covered the building in red paint. The action was part of an international campaign was to force Allianz to drop its financial ties and end its insurance policies for Elbit Systems – the previous week had seen 15 Allianz offices across Europe daubed in red paint and windows smashed.

February 6: PA smashed the front door, broke windows and took action at the Manchester offices of *Computer Discount Company* (CDW), smashing the front door, breaking windows, covering the building in symbolic blood-red paint and spray-painting, "CDW drop Elbit" over the entrance to the building its offices are in. CDW provides Elbit with technical services.

February 10: PA activists smashed the door of *Eagle Strategic Consulting*'s London registered office and sprayed red paint into the building. Eagle is a weapons consultancy firm owned by Richard Applegate, who serves as Director for Elbit's drone-producing subsidiaries in Britain.

March 4: Cambridge Uni students, in collaboration with PA, paint the Old Schools Building – the office that manages the University's Endowment Fund – in blood-red paint. Cambridge Uni conducts research partnerships with Israeli institutes and its colleges invest heavily in Elbit. This followed a similar action at Oxford Uni. the previous week.

March 8: PA entered the 800 acre *Trump Turnberry golf course* in Ayrshire overnight and painted "GAZA IS NOT FOR SALE" in 3-metre-high letters there. They spray-painted the club house and dug up the greens including the prestigious holes This was in response to

February 14: PA report that *LondonMetric*, the landlords of Elbit's "UAV Tactical Systems" drone factory, has sold the site on. After struggling to find a buyer, LondonMetric have now relinquished their interest in Elbit Systems. This follows a PA direct action campaign calling on them to cut its ties with Elbit.

February 17: PA activists targeted BBC's HQ in Portland Place, London. They covered the building in blood-red paint and broke windows in protest against the BBC's ongoing complicity in the genocide of Palestinians through what PA claims is its entrenched pro-Israel bias.

February 18: PA activists shut down the *Rafael* weapons factory at Armstrong Works, Scotswood Road, Newcastle. A specially-adapted vehicle was used to block both entrance to the plant, with an activist locked on inside the secured vehicle. Others climbed on top of it and and sprayed the premise in blood-red paint. Rafael is Israel's third biggest weapons firm, and owned directly by the Israeli state.

February 20: In another apparent success for PA's campaign, *L & B Platings* wrote to PA to inform them it will cease to trade with Elbit immediately. L&B Plating provided a specialist metal finishing process to L3 Harris, whose Brighton factory produces bomb release mechanisms for Israel's F-35 fighter jets. This action came just four days after PA activists from Palestine Action spray-painted the Brighton company's premises with messages such as "Drop L3" and "Free Palestine" and covered them with red paint.



The message on the Trump Turnberry course

the US government's plans and threats to destroy, ethnically cleanse, and "take over" the Gaza Strip.

March 9: At an England v Italy Six Nations Rugby Tournament match at *Allianz*'s Twickenham Stadium, a Palestine Action drone appeared above the stadium flying the Palestine flag.

March 10: PA targeted the City of London premises of *Allianz*. Activists scaled the canopy above the entrance of Allianz Commercial at 60 Gracechurch Street and doused the building in red paint.

Trials: PA reported that 59 PA activists are scheduled for trial this year on 16 court dates from April 15 to September 29. A trial of three activists was listed for February 23 at the City of London Magistrates' Court, but your editor hasn't been able to find whether this trial took place.



Support demonstration for Filton 8 outside Old Bailey, March 27

"The Filton 18": On March 27 the trial began at the Old Bailey in London of 18 PA activists all charged with burglary and causing million pounds worth of criminal damage, and some with violent disorder, at Elbit Systems factory at Filton, Bristol in August 2023. There was a large, noisy demonstration outside the court in support of the 18 on the 27. Eight of the 18 had been remanded in custody for 7 months and the rest for 4 months prior to the hearing. The police justify the remands in prison on the grounds that the offences were "terror-related", though none of the charges brought were under the Terrorism Act.

JUST STOP OIL HALTS CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE CAMPAIGN

On March 27 JSO announced it was ending its existing civil disobedience campaign at the end of April, after three years. It gave as its reason that its initial demand that the UK government ends issuing licences for new oil and gas fields had been achieved. This was after the government confirmed its election pledge to do so on March 5 - the Supreme court had already ruled such licences illegal in June 2024 in a case brought by Greenpeace, and had an appeal against this decision rejected by the court in November.

However the government refused to revoke such licences already granted and said it would allow the exploitation of existing fields to continue. So only a partial victory for JSO. Other reasons for the cessation might be that the increasingly heavy sentences imposed on activists and strong negative reactions among the public to some of the group's civil disobedience methods

JSO in its announcement said this was not the end of its civil disobedience. It announced "We are creating a new strategy...to carry out our new responsibilities...Nothing short of a revolution is going to protect us from the coming storms." To this end it called on "everyone who wants to be part of building the new resistance" to attend a final JSO action in Parliament Square on April 26.

To end with an update of JSO's actions and trials since those recounted in the February/March NVRN:

February 13: PhD student Chiara Sarti (25) found guilty at Peterborough Magistrates' Court of causing £2,430 of criminal damage, fined £3,080 and given a year's conditional discharge. The case arose out of an action in October 23 in which Chiara used a fire extinguisher to spray orange paint over the neo-gothic gatehouse of King's College Cambridge to demand an end to the granting of new oil and gas (the JSO demand)

February 17: Three people who took part in a JSO slow march in Vauxhall in 2023 were found guilty at London Magistrates' Court of causing "more than minor disruption". They were found guilty and given a conditional discharge of 12 months with £333 costs. The action happened the day after new regulations came into force giving police officers greater powers to shut down protests. The regulations were later found to have been introduced illegally by then Home Secretary Suella Braverman. It was judged that she had acted outside her powers in defining "serious disruption" as merely "more than minor" and that it had been wrong to consult only with law enforcement agencies about the repercussions of the change.

February 21: Four JSO supporters found guilty by a majority jury verdict at Manchester Crown of conspiracy to commit a public nuisance after a 15-day trial; a fifth person was acquitted. The four found guilty had been arrested on August 5 2024 as they left a Manchester B&B. All five had been remanded in custody after arrest for six moths until the second day of the trial when they were given bail. In court they admitted they had planned to enter Manchester and that three of them had been planning to glue themselves to a taxiway. As is currently usual in such cases, the jury was not allowed by the judge to use the legal defences of necessity or reasonable excuse. A defence of self-defence was also banned on the basis that there was "no immediate threat". Sentencing has been adjourned until 23rd May for presentencing reports and the four found gyulty were remanded back into custody till then.

March 25: Four JSO activists were found guilty at Falkirk Sheriffs' Court of "reckless and culpable conduct" in actions at Grangemouth oil terminal on July 19 2023 in response to the climate crisis. One of them was sentenced to 16 months while the others were sentenced to electronically-enforced curfews and community service.

March 7: The Court of Appeal rejected the appeals of seven people jailed for causing an obstruction of traffic on the M25 in November 2022 by occupying gantries over it. However it reduced the sentences partially: Roger Hallam had a sentence of five year reduced to four, two had sentences of four years reduced to three, another two with sentences of four years had sentences reduced to 2½ years and one had a sentence of 20 months reduced to 18 months

March 12: Two JSO supporters poured orange liquid latex over an Optimus human robot at the Westfield Tesla store in London and unfurled a banner with the demand that the UK government phase out fossil fuel burning by 2030. They were arrested, presumably for criminal damage.

March 18: At Liverpool Crown Court three JSO activists who pleaded not guilty to intentionally or recklessly causing a public nuisance at Liverpool Golf Club at Hoylake on 21 July 2023, by throwing orange powder, letting off a smoke flare and sitting on the course, had the cases against them dismissed by the judge on the grounds that the did not meet the threshold for public nuisance because of the brevity of the interruption

March 19: Eight JSO activists appeared at Southwark Crown Court charged with conspiracy to cause a public nuisance in relation to 2022 actions that blocked the M25. Following the actions police forcibly entered. the homes of two of the activists looking for evidence of conspiracy and arrested the eight. At the trial the jury found six of the defendants not guilty and two, Ian Bates and Abigail Percy-Ratcliffe guilty. These two were bailed until sentencing on May 9th.



M25 conspiracy trial defendants outside Southwark Crown Court

March 20: 10 JSO activists

were arrested outside Heathrow on July 24 2024 and charged with conspiracy to cause a public nuisance

there, though they didn't actually get into the airport. One of those arrested pleaded guilty at a hearing in September and was presumably sentenced. On the 20th, the other nine appeared in Isleworth Crown Court in a trial beginning on January 27 to answer the charge. On March 20 The jury unanimously acquitted one defendant who was cooking for the group but found the other eight guilty by majority verdicts. Sentencing was adjourned until May 16, with three of the defendants ordered to remain remanded in prison ehere they have been since July 24. One other of them was remanded until sentencing. The other five were granted bail until trial. Again the judge had prevented the jury hearing any of the defendants' prepared defences, ruling the climate emergency to be "irrelevant" and forbidding mention that a jury has a right to acquit a defendant as a matter of conscience. The defendants were not permitted to bring expert witnesses on international law or climate science or to show the jury videos they recorded of themselves speaking before the action, nor were they allowed to read the quotes from news articles about their arrests and subsequent remand to prison.

CITIZENSHIP DENIED

On 10 February 2025, the UK Home Office issued new guidance which effectively bans refugees who had reached this country "illegally" from ever receiving British citizenship. This means that many people who arrive in the UK "illegally" (for most there is no "legal" other way seeking asylum and who are granted it will never be able to become British citizens however long they live in the country or however much they contribute to it.

In the words of a letter signed by 148 people including nine Church of England bishops and Christine McAnea, general secretary of Unison, Labour's most generous union backer, they would remain "2nd class" UK inhabitants breeding division and distrust and become targets of far-right groups.

These new rules faced a legal challenge from a 21-year old Afghan refugee who arrived in the UK as a 14-year old hidden in the back of a lorry. He was granted refugee status, five years

later got indefinite leave to remain and was due to apply for British citizenship on March 1st. Previously he would have met the "being of good character" qualification for citizenship, but not now because he originally arrived "illegally".

In spite of this new guidance and a 2023 ruling that people arriving illegally cannot even apply for asylum, but are to be deported back to their country of origin or the last country they reached Britain from, the number of asylumseekers in limbo in the UK continues to rise steeply. According to UK Ministry of Justices figures, 41,987 asylum seekers were in the UK waiting a decision on asylum appeals at the end of 2024 and, as they are not allowed to work have to live at the cost of the UK taxpayer. This figure represents an almost 71% increase in two years - at the beginning of 2023 the figure So much for the present government's promise to speed up dealing with asylum applications.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND PROTEST UNDER ATTACK

Following a five-week trial, on March 18 a North Dakota jury found *Greenpeace* guilty of defamation, trespass, nuisance and civil conspiracy in a case brought by pipeline company *Energy Transfer*, during a 2016-2017 Greenpeace protest campaign against the Dakota Access pipeline's construction by the company. The court then ordered Greenpeace to pay the company some £510 million damages to the company.

Such cases constitute a threat to freedom of speech and assembly as few protest organisations can afford to risk paying such damages, while of course big companies can afford to spend enormous sums on bringing them. As Brian Hause, an American Civil Liberties Union attorney put ii, the lawsuit served as a "tax on speech", making it too expensive to go against "litigious, deep-pocketed corporations". Energy Transfer was co-founded by a prominent Trump donor and the company is worth over \$55 billion.

This is not the only recent case of attacks on free speech in the US. Protests on US college campuses supporting Palestinian human rights have been met with disciplinary actions and the US *International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law* has identified an increase in anti-protest laws sine 2017. Such attacks on freedom of speech hare been mirrored in the UK with the shutting down of protests on campuses and the disciplining of lecturers who speak against Israeli actions in Gaza.

In a recent egregious example, on March 27 more than 20 police with tasers raided Westminster Quaker meeting house and arrested six women at a gathering of protest group *Youth Demand*. The Met said it had arrested the six "on suspicion of conspiracy to cause a public nuisance", while *Youth Demand* gives as its aims, to "stop arming Israel" and "cancelling new oil and gas [licences] granted since 2021".

COMING EVENTS

April

10, 7.30-10pm, London "The French Connection." At Lauderdale House, Waterlow Park, Highgate. French piano music from *La Belle Époque*, played by Julian Jacobson. Interval speaker; Jeremy Corbyn. Org. by *Musicians for Peace and Disarmament*. £20/£15.

Enquiries: info.mpdconcerts@gmail.com

12, noon, London: assemble for" East London March for Palestine at Altar Ali Park E1 1FD to Kennington Green, E3 5TD for rally. Info: info@palestinecampaign.org

14-26, Lakenheath: Peace Camp at Lakenheath US airbase in Suffolk. From £10 a night, plus extra for stay in yurt. Homestays with locals for those unable to camp. Info at 07773 193704, or wellbeing@extinctionrebellion.uk; Download leaflet about camp here.

16, Bury St. Edmunds, 7.30pm: "Say No To Nukes." Benefit gig for the Lakenheath Peace Camp at Hunter Club, 6, Saint Andrew's Street South, IP33 3PH With *Seize the Day*acoustic band and Robb Johnson. Book at: https://tinyurl.com/mur9uce5

22, 6-7.30pm, ONLINE: "Living through the End: Nuclear War in 1980s TV and Movies [*The Day After, Testament* and *Threads*]" Earth Day event, discussing these films and nuclear anxiety, past and present. <u>Info</u>: Living through the End: Nuclear War in 1980s TV and Movies.

24, 9.30am-5.30pm, Lakenheath Peace Camp: "Analysing and Resisting US Nuclear Expansion." Intentional conference, with Angie Zelter, Sophie Bolt and Kate Hudson plus many international speakers. Tickets Free, but donations welcome.

Info: info@lakenheathallianceforpeace.org.uk

24, 6pm, ONLINE: "Wars in Ukraine, Gaza,
Lebanon & Sudan: What Future for UN and
World Peace?" Spring Conference with
distinguished speakers followed by hour of
Q&A. Organised by *Uniting for Peace*. Book
free on: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/wars-in-ukraine-gaza-lebanon-sudan-what-f...

26, 10am: London CND coach leaves from Embankment near Embankment tube to to take

supporters to take part in events on final day of Lakenheath Peace Camp. Coach tickets from £10-£35. Contact London CND on info@londoncnd.org or Register here. For details of coaches from elsewhere in the UK on the 26th contact CND at enquiries@cnduk.org

May

1, London: "Yes to Workers' Rights! No the Far Right!" International Workers' Day march and rally from Clerkenwell Green (assemble noon) for march to Trafalgar Square for rally from 2.30pm. Organised by Greater London Association of Trade Union Councils) . See http://www.londonmayday.org/

12, London: **2-5pm**: PSC is organising a mass lobby of Parliament calling for sanctions to be implemented against Israel, including an end to all military cooperation and arms trade, and a ban on all other trade that aids or assists Israel in maintaining its illegal occupation. To register for lobby and to contact your MP, enter: "PSC lobby May 2025."

15, London, 1-2pm: International Conscientious Objectors' Ceremony by the COs' memorial in Tavistock Square WC1. Speakers include Or, an Israeli CO. Plus singing and the laying of white poppies on the memorial. Organised by the *Peace Pledge Union*, mail@ppu.org.uk

Every Wednesday, 6-7pm, London: Women in Black silent vigil against militarism and war by the Edith Cavell statue in St. Martin's Place, WC2. Wear black.

Info: www.london.womeninblack.org

Every Friday, Brighton: Women in Black silent vigil at the War Memorial, Old Steine, Brighton. Info: brightonwib@11qp.co.uk

Every Saturday, Oxford, 2-3pm: Women in Black silent vigil for Peace and Justice at the Martyrs Memorial, bottom of St Giles, Oxford. Info: oxfordwib@gmail.com

First Tuesday of each month, 10.30am-noon, Brighton: Brighton & Hove WILB group meeting at Jubilee Library, Brighton. Info: brightonwib@11qp.co.uk