



# FARINGDON PEACE GROUP

**NEWSLETTER 34**

**MARCH-APRIL 2024**

“We hope for peace, we pray for peace, we work for peace”.

## **FARINGDON PEACE GROUP CONTACTS**

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As part of a series of talks during Lent

**IAN CAVE**, who has volunteered with  
**ECUMENICAL ACCOMPANERS IN  
PALESTINE AND ISRAEL (EAPPI)**

will speak at the Friends Meeting House  
MONDAY MARCH 4th at 7.30pm  
Everyone is very welcome.

## **PRAY FOR PEACE**

We all say we want peace, but most of us feel pretty helpless in bringing this about, especially at the moment.

Faringdon Quakers invite you to join them on the last Saturday of every month, at least until Easter.

The Garden Room will be open for coffee from 10am-12noon, and we do serve a very good cup of coffee!

Then between 10.30-11.30am you are invited into the Meeting House for a quiet time of prayer and contemplation. Intended for people of all faiths, and none.

During this time you can come and go as you wish, so don't feel you have to sit in silence for an hour!

Faringdon Quaker Meeting House  
Please publicise!

## **A BIG MEETING PLANNED FOR MAY**

A big meeting in the Corn Exchange is planned for May 11th, with the title

### **“BUILDING A FAIRER WORLD”**

**Build a fairer system, a fairer world, where everyone has what they need to live.**

To be chaired by Tracy Walsh

**The line-up of speakers so far:**

#### **Symon Hill**

*Campaigns Manager for the Peace Pledge Union and Editor of Peace matters*

#### **Molly Scot Cato**

*Molly Scott Cato is a former Green MEP and is Emeritus Professor of Green Economics at the University of Roehampton's Centre of Sustainability and Responsible Management; focusing on an economy that fits within planetary limits and social justice.*

#### **Ashley Smith**

*Founder Windrush Against Sewage Pollution (WASP)*

There will be at least one more speaker which we hope will include a local politician.

## **NEXT MONTHLY MEETING**

WEDNESDAY 6th MARCH at 7.30pm  
at The Friends Meeting House

### **GAZA**

The speaker is Bernard Regan  
Author of 'The Balfour Declaration, Empire, the Mandate and Resistance in Palestine'.  
Executive Member of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

**BOOK THE DATE**

**LEVELLERS DAY**

**AT BURFORD**

**Saturday May 18th**

**More details to follow**

## **PALESTINE A PERSONAL ACCOUNT FROM A MAP VOLUNTEER .....**

For the past three years, I have been involved in a project to improve healthcare provision in the occupied West Bank. It began with a request made to the Royal College of Psychiatrists for someone to provide online teaching on electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) to junior doctors in Bethlehem. When delivered properly, ECT is a very safe and effective medical treatment, and is used worldwide for several severe mental illnesses. As an ECT specialist and an officer of the College, I offered to provide this training, during which I learnt several things about ECT provision in Palestine. First, it is delivered by young doctors who have had almost no training in its use. Second, there is a complete lack of supervision of its use by senior doctors. Third, the medical equipment being used was broken, obsolete and unfit for purpose.

Leading on from this, a project to develop the ECT service was initiated as part of the College's work with Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP), a UK-based charity. This resulted in me making two trips to Bethlehem Psychiatric Hospital, supported by MAP and the College. By the time of my first visit in the spring of 2022, MAP had bought two new ECT machines to replace the decrepit equipment previously in use. I was able to instruct the junior doctors on their proper use, as well as provide more generalised practical skills training in ECT delivery. In the de facto capital, Ramallah, I met with Dr Mai al-Kaila, the Health Minister, pressing the need to fund and develop psychiatric services and postgraduate training in her country. During my second visit in summer 2022, I continued the practical training and led meetings to find a consensus on developing Bethlehem's written ECT policy, ensuring practice would fall in line with international standards.

My visits provided me with an insight into the obstacles to provision of healthcare in Palestine. The 280 settlements dotted throughout the West Bank, housing some 670,000 Israelis, are supported by extensive

physical infrastructure across the territory. This includes access-restricted roads, military bases, first-world healthcare facilities, huge concrete barriers and military checkpoints. This infrastructure, covering around 40% of the West Bank, fragments the remaining Palestinian communities into disconnected enclaves, restricting movement and development of healthcare systems. Driving between towns not only requires the crossing of checkpoints, but the use of circuitous, poorly maintained roads that can turn what ought to be a 20-minute trip into, at best, a 2-hour trek.

During my tour of al-Makassed General Hospital, in East Jerusalem, the medical director explained to me the ordeals endured by patients whose emergency ambulances are held up at checkpoints. Additionally, there is little scope for patients to travel to be properly assessed by doctors before beginning a course of outpatient treatment such as ECT. Patients often miss subsequent treatments due to these restrictions. As a lower-middle-income nation, resources for healthcare are very limited. The psychiatric hospital in Bethlehem is the only such facility in the West Bank, serving its entire population of 3 million Palestinians.

Since my last visit, I have provided monthly online supervision sessions to the junior doctors in Bethlehem, but those doctors will soon move on to senior jobs, to be replaced by the next cohort of doctors specialising in psychiatry. The next step in the project will be for a senior doctor from Bethlehem to develop a special interest in ECT. To enable this, she will need to spend time observing high-quality ECT provision in the UK. This should enable sustainability of service improvements, as this doctor will then be in a position to train future junior doctors locally, on an ongoing basis. But given the current war in Gaza, which has resulted in increased travel restrictions from the West Bank, it seems improbable that this phase could be initiated in the near future.

*Richard*

## **THE SUMMARY OF A TALK GIVEN BY PETER FOOT AT OUR FEBRUARY MONTHLY MEETING**

The International Red Cross was formed in 1864 as a result of Henry Dunant seeing the unnecessary pain, suffering and death at the Battle of Solferino (1859). He helped establish by treaty a permanent relief agency, guaranteed by international agreement, that could be relied upon to provide help. It was signed by all the main powers of Europe in 1864 – the First Geneva Convention.

This sparked an unprecedented popular movement of support across the signatory countries: each created a national ‘relief agency’. It was these that provided the battlefield assistance to all sides in the Franco-Prussian War 1870-71, a short war won by the German Confederation, led by Prussia. Most agency personnel used the ‘red cross’ emblem as flags or armbands to distinguish them from combatants.

As part of France’s defeat, an army of around 90,000 men escaped into Switzerland and was promptly disarmed. Inspired by the Swiss Red Cross, all of those military internees were spread across Switzerland – living with families, in schools, churches, hospitals and hastily assembled barracks. Hardly a village was unaware of what Switzerland was doing to be welcoming: food, clothing, shelter, postage services were provided entirely gratis until the international situation months later allowed the French soldiers to return to their homes.

It is on this historical basis that Switzerland’s international position remains unique and guaranteed: its policy of neutrality (unlike that, say, of Sweden and Finland) is non-negotiable. It remains the global headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross, devoted to ‘waging war against war’ – a task impossible without also adopting the often ethically uncomfortable, and usually controversial, stance of full neutrality in times of conflict.

### **A CONCERT run by OUCH**

(Oxford Ukraine Concert Harmony)

on Saturday March 2nd at 7.30pm

St Mary's University Church, High St, Oxford.

Please share with your email lists, and give generously - this is a fundraiser for Ukraine.

## **THE RIGHT TO BOYCOTT**

Over 70 civil society organisations including Amnesty International, Liberty, Quakers in Britain and Unison, told MPs and peers that the bill could force anyone who works in, or is elected to, these organisations, to refrain from open and honest communication on matters of conscience. Almost 18,000 people, signed a petition against the bill

The government’s Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill would restrict people’s ability to tackle injustice, he said.

The government says the bill will ensure public bodies follow UK foreign policy in their purchasing, procurement, and investment decisions.

In reality, it will force universities and local authorities to ignore ethical issues when investing in or procuring services from foreign companies complicit in human rights abuses or environmental degradation abroad.

By specifically granting permanent immunity to Israel and its illegal occupation of Palestinian territories, the legislation serves to legitimise human rights abuses, parliamentarians were told.

Clause 4 in the bill prevents public bodies from stating whether they would support boycott or divestment campaigns if it were lawful to do so.

MPs passed the bill in a vote on 10th January and it will now be considered by the House of Lords.

### **SURFERS AGAINST SEWAGE**

**in 2023 the Surfers against sewage made a huge impact for the ocean. Check out some headline stats below and then dive into the full report for all the details.**

- 93,906 volunteers took part in a “Million Mile Clean”
- 927 communities and 5,700 businesses signed up to Plastic Free Communities.
- Our “Safer Seas and Rivers Service” app reached 250,000 downloads
- 173,043 signatures on our Dirty Money petition to end sewage pollution

Please see ‘Surfers Against Sewage’ website for more info on this and other aspects of pollution in our seas and on our beaches.

*With thanks to ‘Surfers against Sewage’*

**Thank you to Karen for sending this.**

To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places - and there are so many - where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvellous victory.

from the blog of Mazin Qumiyeh  
(humanrights@lists.qumsiyeh)

(Karen suggests this is well worth signing up to)



Subject to there being enough interest, I'm starting a Complete Beginners Ukulele course, to run over three or four weeks during March, and for longer if we wish. Probably on a Wednesday or Thursday morning, but to suit participants as far as possible. Venue tbc. For Peaceniks and anyone else interested.

I have Ukes to borrow, so you don't need your own.

Interested? Please contact Jenny on  
jennyridd@yahoo.co.uk **NOW**

**ANOTHER PLANNING MEETING**

We have another meeting planned, to continue with plans for our big May meeting.

**Wednesday March 13th at 2pm**

at 19 Coxwell Road, Faringdon.

If you would like to be involved in the planning, come along, and preferably let Jennie know beforehand.

**WHERE'S OUR DRS?**

(No, not a dig at the White Horse Medical Practice) Other countries have successfully had a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for years. And we've been promised one in the UK. So, where is it?

A deposit return scheme is a no-brainer for everyone who doesn't profit from pollution. But businesses and plastic producers are pushing back.

*With thanks to 'Surfers against Sewage'*

"Live together as brothers, or perish together as fools". *Martin Luther King*