



# ABINGDON PEACE GROUP

Newsletter

January 2021

## **Nuclear Weapons finally illegal on Jan 22nd!**

Yes, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) becomes international law on Jan 22. The UK and the other nuclear states have, unsurprisingly, declined to sign up to the treaty – as yet. But we think if pressure is brought to bear by campaigners such as us and equally importantly, by the non-nuclear states, that should change.

Abingdon Peace Group will be celebrating on Saturday 23rd January. We have 2-metre banners, flags and some giant champagne bottles, and we hope that in some of the town's church bells will be rung. Would you be willing to hold one end of a banner? Let us know if so. We don't need a crowd, just to be visible!  
**More on the back page**

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## **NEXT MEETING, on zoom:**

**Tuesday, 19th January 2021 at 8pm**

**Abingdon Peace Group Online Meeting on TUESDAY 19th January 2021 at 8.00 pm:**

## ***Drone Wars 2021***

**Shining a spotlight on the growing use of drones on the battlefield and the home-front  
Speaker: Chris Cole of Drone Wars UK**

The use of armed drones has grown considerably over the past decade and we are now seeing them being used in many conflicts around the globe. But increasingly we also are seeing drones being used outside of war zones, deployed against refugees fleeing armed conflicts and also for monitoring protestors. Drones are frequently mentioned in media reporting, but rarely connection with their military applications, leading, we suspect, to most people thinking of practical problems with civil aviation (think Gatwick a couple of years ago), rather than to troubling ethical concerns.



Chris Cole, left, will give an update on this issue and detail the work that Drone Wars UK have been doing. If you would like to brief yourself a little before the meeting, the link for Drone Wars 2021:  
<https://dronewars.net/>

**Joining the meeting:** Either use the link below or look out for a message with the link on January 19<sup>th</sup>. If you don't receive it and would like to take part, simply email us using [abingdonpeace@gmail.com](mailto:abingdonpeace@gmail.com)  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/91315134101?pwd=RmxHLzBQaXlHYjFSRm5nREVzYjdSdz09>  
Meeting ID: 913 1513 4101 Passcode: 015836

## Our December celebrations (alas no freeloading)

Are we downhearted ? No!

The Christmas party season has been disappointing for many but, despite Covid restrictions, the Peace Group was able to meet for its traditional jollifications - thanks to zoom. This year some 15 of us came together, which was higher than last year.

Apart from friendly chat we were kept diverted by two general knowledge and peace quizzes, followed by some varied readings including an amusing directive on how to keep the stable at Bethlehem covid-free, followed by more serious reflections. Later, one of our company sang solo a Christmas carol creating the right warm festive atmosphere and at the end of the evening we were led in spirited community sing-along with "We wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year" It was wonderful to get together and have such a lively and cheerful time. We had to supply our own food and drinks but that did not matter. At least we were able to make a toast to each other across the video link. (Tony Godfrey)

## Fellowship of Reconciliation job vacancy - Administration and Finance Officer

14 hrs a week, £18 – £20k pro rata (£7200 – £8000), Oxford based .

Do spreadsheets make your soul sing? Are you organised, efficient and collaborative in how you work? Do you want to do your small bit to make the world a more peaceful place?

The Fellowship of Reconciliation is seeking a new Administration and Finance Officer to join our small team. You will be responsible for the efficient running of our administration and finance systems that keep our movement active. From processing information to creating reports, your attention to detail and systemic way of working will ensure we continue to act for peace. Through your skills and experience in book-keeping and finance work you'll ensure we always know what money we have (and help ensure it's used effectively) to keep making a difference.

You will be based at Peace House, Oxford, which you will also oversee to ensure that people who hire it are happy and work with a committee/contractors to keep the building in good shape.

To apply see details – [www.for.org.uk/jobs](http://www.for.org.uk/jobs) and then please send a completed application form to John Cooper, Director, ( [john@for.org.uk](mailto:john@for.org.uk) ) by 5pm on Friday 15th January 2021

## Further Cameroon update

*As promised, Anne Dodd has provided another update on Cameroon, which has become a matter of serious concern for Abingdon Peace Group over the last year:*

The sporadic violence continues and also the lack of progress in finding good ways forward. Please continue to raise awareness of the conflict and continue to lobby using your networks. A key source of information is <http://cameroonpeacejustice.ca>. They are seeking to get all the armed actors in the Anglophone Cameroon conflict to have a ceasefire and participate in peace talks. One of their projects may be of interest to individual APG members. It grew out of an awareness of the unarmed civilians living in fear and the need to build some normalcy into the lives, particularly those of children. Through access to a local radio station, there is a call for short childrens stories to be recorded by individuals and sent to the radio station concerned. For more detailed information on this initiative, please contact me at [peteranne@aol.com](mailto:peteranne@aol.com). (Anne Dodd)

*PS Anne has received news from Rebecca Tinsley of encouraging news from the US .This should put some pressure on the British government as the former colonial power:*

After four years of conflict, people living in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon may finally have reason to be optimistic. On New Year's Day, the US Senate passed a strongly-worded resolution paving the way for punitive sanctions on those responsible for atrocities in Cameroon. In a rare bipartisan motion, the US Congress slammed the Francophone-dominated government of President Paul Biya, accusing it of repressing Anglophone citizens both politically and economically for decades. The Senators also cite the Yaounde administration's corruption and allegedly fraudulent elections.

The resolution calls for targeted smart sanctions against armed actors implicated in human rights abuses, it demands unfettered humanitarian access to the conflict zone, it calls for the Biya government to participate in mediated talks to address the root causes of the conflict, and it commits the US to continue to limit its security assistance to Cameroon.

### **The environmental impacts of the UK military sector, by Dr Stuart Parkinson**

- title of a 36 page SGR (Scientists for Global Responsibility).

download: <https://www.sgr.org.uk/publications/environmental-impacts-uk-military-sector>

"The carbon footprint of British military spending is 11 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, a new report launched today has estimated. This is more than 11 times the figure the Ministry of Defence (MOD) usually highlights when discussing the British military contribution to global heating – and is similar to the emissions produced by over six million average UK cars in a year" - from the media release.

**Government report to Parliament: [The United Kingdom's future nuclear deterrent: the 2020 update to Parliament](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-united-kingdoms-future-nuclear-deterrent-the-2020-update-to-parliament)** - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-united-kingdoms-future-nuclear-deterrent-the-2020-update-to-parliament>

**Nuclear trickery in Brexit deal:** <http://drdavidlowry.blogspot.com/2020/12/nuclear-trickery-in-brexit-deal.html>

"The Brexit trade agreement between the UK and EU of 24 December 2020 contains over 1200 pages, including annexes. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agreements-reached-between-the-united-kingdom-of-great-britain-and-northern-ireland-and-the-european-union>) It includes an 18 page section on nuclear co-operation ([https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/draft\\_eu-uk\\_civil\\_nuclear\\_agreement.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/draft_eu-uk_civil_nuclear_agreement.pdf)), which is strong on outlining the importance of nuclear safeguards, peaceful uses of nuclear materials and regulatory oversight. [Later in the blog] I have extracted the key sections dealing with nuclear materials. It contains a surprising provision at the end that would render the atomic agreement invalid."

### **Youthful Solidarity in Bamiyan brings hope this winter**

We heard this from Maya, Henrietta and Mary at VCN-V UK (Voices for Creative Non-violence UK) in mid-December: "For Afghan students it's the winter holidays and in Bamiyan the Youth Solidarity team is setting up a school for street kids during their three month vacation. Having assessed the level of need amongst families living in caves, they will set up a school, tree planting project and hand out solar cooking pots", adding "the students need to raise £2200 to run the winter school". Donations requested to the Co-operative Bank, Voices for Creative Non-violence UK, account 65583025, sortcode 089299." Please check these details by contacting [web@vcnv.org.uk](mailto:web@vcnv.org.uk).

PS December 2020 newsletter at <http://vcnv.org.uk/2020/12/> - always very heartening.

### **Diary**

*Sun Jan 17: [Peace Sunday](http://www.paxchristi.org.uk) <http://www.paxchristi.org.uk>*

*Fri Jan 22: [Thanksgiving Service for TPNW](#) - short service at 11:30. Christian CND will be gathering to celebrate the TPNW with a short Thanksgiving Service hosted by the Network of Christian Peace Organisations. It will take place on Zoom at 11:30 and we hope to finish with bells ringing in celebration of nuclear weapons being banned. See <https://christiancnd.org.uk/events/> for the link.*

*Mon Jan 25: [Yemen day of action](#) - Stop the War, <http://bit.ly/StopTheWarYemenCantWait> for more info.*

*Sat Jan 23: [Abingdon Market Place](#) from 10.30am for about an hour. Celebrate the coming into force of the TPNW (see page 1 and backpage).*

*Wed Jan 27: [Holocaust Memorial Day](http://www.hmd.org.uk/) <http://www.hmd.org.uk/>*

*Thu Jan 28: [Wellbeing for Future Generations: building a more peaceful world](https://cnduk.org/events/wellbeing-for-future-generations-building-a-more-peaceful-world-youth-and-student-cnd-event/) – Youth & Student CND <https://cnduk.org/events/wellbeing-for-future-generations-building-a-more-peaceful-world-youth-and-student-cnd-event/>*



## The TPNW (continued from front page)

The plan was – and might yet still be – to take walking exercise in the Market Place from 10.30am for an hour or so, observing a distance from each other of 2 metres. We have checked the tier 4 regulations – see below for further info. We think these rules, which require the making of a risk assessment, which we are presently completing, will probably remain the same under the lock down. However, while we hope strongly that you will want to take part on Saturday 23rd, you should not assume the demonstration is going ahead until you hear so from us – which will be after this newsletter has come out.

Even in Tier 5 lockdown, Liberty say it is legal to take part in a demonstration provided a risk assessment has

been done – see below for further info. We aim for less than 30 people, so let us know if you can come. Please don't come if you are at all concerned about infection, and obviously don't come if you have any symptoms. Wear a mask and stay 2m apart.

If you can't join us, can you persuade your local church to ring their bells? And we can all put a poster in our window and tell our friends about it! You can download one here: [Layout 1 \(cnduk.org\)](https://cnduk.org)

### The rules

"You are allowed to attend a protest that has been organised in all Tiers as long as:

- it has been organised by a business, a charitable, benevolent or philanthropic institution, a public body or a political body,
- the protest organiser has carried out a risk assessment which meets the requirements of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, and
- the gathering organiser has taken "all reasonable measures" to limit the spread of coronavirus in line with the risk assessment and any relevant government guidance."

### **Quotation from a commentary on the TPNW in** <https://warontherocks.com/>

"While nuclear-armed states and NATO allies remain opposed to the treaty, the tone is softening, and at least two NATO allies are breaking the consensus." ...

"The rhetoric of nuclear-armed states and NATO allies vis-à-vis the nuclear ban treaty seems to be changing (...). They first of all acknowledge the lack of nuclear disarmament and the resulting frustration on behalf of the non-nuclear weapon states. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau previously called the treaty negotiations "a useless exercise," and spokespeople for the Canadian government called the conclusion of the treaty in July 2017 "premature." As treaty ratifications increased, Canada has not repeated these kinds of statements."

The authors, Tom Sauer and Claire Nardon, also discuss Belgium and the Netherlands, both Nato members and hosts to US nuclear bases, and both a tad nervous about not committing to the TPNW), the former with 76% of population saying their country should sign up (in a November 2020 poll); the latter declining to boycott the multi-lateral negotiations that led to the treaty, despite US urgings. There are no signs of an imminent breakthrough, but there is nervousness.

(link: <https://warontherocks.com/2020/12/the-softening-rhetoric-by-nuclear-armed-states-and-nato-allies-on-the-treaty-on-the-prohibition-of-nuclear-weapons/>)

**Comments, corrections, contributions etc to this newsletter are very welcome.**

*Abingdon Peace Group meets on the third Tuesday of each month except August. At present our meetings are taking place online. All who are interested in peace and campaigning for it are welcome to take part. The Group has no party political affiliations.*

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