



ABINGDON PEACE GROUP

Newsletter

December 2021



With very best wishes for the season from Abingdon Peace Group. Get card from peaceneeds.info/shop

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Next meeting: Tuesday, 21st December 2021, at 8pm, at the Northcourt Centre, Northcourt Road (**but see note below**)

End of year social gathering

As always we plan to mark the season with a get-together, with refreshments, a quiz or two and as many readings and songs as the assembled company wishes.

Refreshments: we will provide mulled wine and you might like to bring other things to drink. You could also offer some nibbles to share, both sweet and savoury.

As for readings and songs, bring a poem to read; or a none too lengthy chunk of prose (your editor had an English teacher who made us learn bits of *Moby Dick* by heart, saying it was poetry).

Please note: The planning group made the decision to have a face-to-face party before any of us had heard of the Omicron variant. Obviously, if it goes ahead, we will observe the safe behaviour practices that we have become used to.

Today (Thursday December 9) this newsletter is being sent for duplication. The rules were toughed a bit yesterday but our planned event on December 21 remains permissible. If we learn between now and then that our planned party cannot go ahead, we will of course contact you by email (or you can ring the number at the foot of the newsletter).

In any case the planning group will make its own decision on December 19 and confirm the event to you – or not – by email.

If we end up cancelling the original plan, we will meet online, using *zoom*, as so many times over the last year and a half.

The readings and the quizzes will be easy to run, but the imbibing will be solitary. A pity, but never mind. To join the meeting either use the link below or look out for a message with the link on December 20th. If you don't receive it and would like to take part, email us (abingdonpeace@gmail.com).

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/91315134101?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/91315134101?pwd=RmxHLzBQaXlHYjFSRm5nREVzYjdSdz09)
[pwd=RmxHLzBQaXlHYjFSRm5nREVzYjdSdz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/91315134101?pwd=RmxHLzBQaXlHYjFSRm5nREVzYjdSdz09)
Meeting ID: 913 1513 4101 Passcode: 015836

Our November meeting: Emma Pritchard reflections from the World IPB Congress

In November our speaker was Emma Pritchard who had been a delegate at the IPB (International Peace Bureau) congress in Barcelona, specifically to participate as an IPB Youth Movement activist. She is widely travelled as a human rights supporter to seriously disadvantaged groups in Palestine, Nepal and Jordan; and having completed a masters degree in Conflict Resolution at Bradford has recently embarked on a D Phil in Oxford on the subject of marginalised people.

She reported on some of the current IPBYM campaigns. One is corruption in the international arms trade, inherently secretive of course. (For more info go to the World Peace Foundation website at <https://sites.tufts.edu/wpf/global-arms-trade-and-corruption/>). Another is the 'securitisation of climate change', the tendency of governments to solve problems with troops, where the military have already significantly contributed to the problem; with the side benefit of promoting militarism overall.

She spoke as a 'young person', but not as one who was asking her elders to ensure that future generations be 'borne in mind' by the presently powerful. Rather, she was asserting the younger generation's right to make demands and not be patronised. The young are not only the future, they are also the present, she pointed out. Age does not of itself confer wisdom – not when it comes to bringing about change.

Within this framework she had plenty of strong observations to make. Peace movement organisations tended to be very white and eurocentric and were thus prone to unconscious racism. And we should stop fretting about getting the 'youth' to be committed to the various issues we all campaign on. Emma's point here was that young people are already actively campaigning, in a plethora of groups who are often unaware of each other. The question is how to get all these groups to be aware of each other so as to solve the problems. (Mike Bloom)

Report - Building Bridges: FAITHS FOR PEACE

An interfaith event in Oxford's Quaker Meeting House was held on 20th Nov. It looked at ways in which teachings on Peace and Non - Violence in the sacred texts of the main religions can build bridges between different faiths and cultures. The 4 speakers were Dr Maria Power, a Fellow of Blackfriars Hall, Oxford, Dr Kamel ait Tahar, amongst other roles the Muslim Chaplain to the High Sherrif of Oxford, Vijay Mehta, a Hindu peace activist and Chair of Uniting for Peace and Buddhist Roslyn Cook, a CND Council member. The need to work towards building a more just and peaceful world is a core belief in all 4 religions.

The word Islam itself, we learned, means 'peace' and more than 250 verses of the Quoran highlight peace. Dr Power emphasised Pope Francis' clear teaching that structural violence was the enemy of justice and peace and that not only the use, but the mere possession, of nuclear weapons is immoral.

In the Q&A session we were reminded that the media so often focused on the violent perversion of religious teachings and this was something that needed greater awareness.

Steve Hucklesby of the Joint Public Issues Team chaired the 'Campaigning for Peace' part of the event. He gave examples of where churches had been influential in such issues as banning cluster munitions and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. A multi-faith initiative has surveyed the policies of the major UK banks and financial institutions regarding the funding of companies involved in nuclear weapons. He urged us to take one action in the coming month: continue the pressure for divestment from companies producing weapons of war, or pick one other area and follow it up. Below are some suggestions from the meeting.

1. Nuclear weapons investment

Find out if your pension fund or bank are still investing, and write to them if they are: Visit Don't Bank on the Bomb – Who profits from producing nuclear weapons? (dontbankonthebomb.com)

2. Ecocide

More at Stop Ecocide International - Bring it to the attention of our MPs & Fabian Hamilton.

3. TPNW

Ask your faith leaders to support the call for TPNW. Visit ICAN - International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (icanw.org)

4. COP26 follow-up.

UK faith groups are taking action to Make COP Count. See <https://makecopcount.org/>
(Sally Reynolds and Anne Dodd)

Bit by Bit, the Noose Is Tightening Around the Nuclear Weapons Industry

'Human beings are not necessarily destined to annihilate ourselves' - reads the caption over a report in *The Intercept* on December 5 (<https://theintercept.com/2021/12/05/nuclear-weapons-public-pressure-pax/>) based on work done and published by the Dutch organisation PAX, a member organisation of ICAN, the Nobel Prize-winning International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons that many of us are well acquainted with.

The website <https://www.dontbankonthebomb.com/perilous-profiteering/> has the following:

"Perilous Profiteering: The companies building nuclear arsenals and their financial backers" is a joint publication of ICAN and its partner PAX. The report details how 338 financial institutions made \$685 billion available to 25 nuclear weapon producing companies from China, France, India, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States. The summary reads as follows:

"The number of banks, pension funds, asset managers and insurance companies investing in the production of nuclear weapons is going down, as shown in the 2021 report "Perilous Profiteering: The companies building nuclear arsenals and their financial backers" by ICAN and PAX.

The data shows fewer financial institutions invest than in the previous year's analysis, with significant drops in the shareholder values of investments in the 25 companies involved in nuclear weapon production.

The report also examined companies involved in producing, manufacturing, or developing nuclear weapons for six of the nine nuclear armed countries for which data was available. These 25 companies are involved in activities that are now illegal under the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which entered into force in 2021. More than \$200 billion in contracts were identified, though the true number is likely much higher since many companies do not publish contract details. Nuclear weapon producers from Russia and China were included in this report for the first time, as these companies are also seeking to finance debt through loans and bond-issuances and are newly engaged in the global financial marketplace."

PS In this connection, we have heard the suggestion that Germany will probably attend the meeting of Parties for the TPNW next year. If so, pretty good news.

Palestine, a reminder

In May this year, the world watched as Israel again waged war on Palestinians. Its indiscriminate bombing killed 260 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, destroying schools, health clinics and homes, whilst Israeli armed force attacked Palestinian protestors in the occupied West Bank and inside Israel with a new level of brutality – message from War on Want (www.waronwant.org/our-work/palestine).

See also the diary entry for December 16 - CAABU briefing on Climate Change in the Middle East after Cop26.

Anna Sylvester

Anna died earlier this month, aged 70. She was an active supporter of the peace group for many years, delivering newsletters faithfully and was a linchpin at the annual jumble sale. She will be remembered as an always friendly, outspoken, wise and witty person.

“Priti Patel has quietly been stuffing even more punitive anti-protest powers into the policing bill”

Caption in [news.co.uk/opinion/priti-patel-anti-protest-powers-stuffed-policing-bill-1316830](https://www.news.co.uk/opinion/priti-patel-anti-protest-powers-stuffed-policing-bill-1316830)

Link to article by Chris Cole “Six strikes that show the reality of drone warfare today”

www.cndsalisbury.org.uk/news_items/2067-six-strikes-that-show-the-reality-of-drone-warfare-today

“Looking at the Nationality and Borders Bill from a small boat”

Article by Felicity Laurence in Dec/Jan Peace News – peacenews.info/node/10057/looking-nationality-and-borders-bill-small-boat

Amendments to the policing bill that will chill you to the bone

(<https://www.thecanary.co/opinion/2021/11/18/revealed-the-amendments-to-the-policing-bill-that-will-chill-you-to-the-bone/>)

MAW 2021 Remembrance Lecture by Asad Rehman

Asad Rehman, the executive director of the anti-poverty charity War on Want, speaking the day after the end of the COP26 climate conference, traces the links between colonialism, militarism and climate change, and makes a forceful case for a radical, anti-imperialist Global Green New Deal. See the video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FidcAshZl9k>

Diary

Sat Dec 11: ‘No AUKUS pact – No New Cold War: International Day of Action’ - CND has joined with the Australian and US peace movements to draw public attention to the dangerous new AUKUS military pact between Australia, the UK and the US, escalating the West’s confrontation with China. <https://cnduk.org/events/no-aukus-pact-no-new-cold-war-international-day-of-acti...>

Tue Dec 14: Faringdon Peace Group's traditional Women in Black Silent Vigil for Peace in Bethlehem. Faringdon Market Place 10.0 – 11.0. Women, please wear black if possible, maybe bring candles. Men please come and help by giving out leaflets explaining the situation in Palestine in general. Please contact Jennie (01367 710308) if you plan to attend.

Thu Dec 16: CAABU briefing on Climate Change in the Middle East after Cop26 - online event on climate change in the Middle East after COP26 with Senior Research Fellow at Chatham House's Environment and Society Programme, Glada Lahn, economist and Senior Research Fellow at the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, Dr Manal Shehabi, and climate advocate and founder of SustainMENA, Shada El-Sharif, on Thursday 16 December 2021 at 2:30pm (GMT UK time). Register at caabu.org

Tue Jan 4: NPT review starts

Tue Jan 18: Abingdon Peace Group Meeting – marking the holocaust (tbc) at 8pm

Thu Jan 27: Holocaust Memorial Day The UK Ceremony for HMD 2022 will be streamed online at 7pm. Register on the website to watch the Ceremony online. <http://www.hmd.org.uk/>

Sat Mar 12: A Celebration of Women’s Voices in Peace and Protest – An evening of music and poetry with the Sea Green Singers, Iraqi Women Art & War, and women peace campaigners, celebrating women’s voices in protest over the decades. Special event at Cornerstone Arts Centre, Didcot, at 7pm.

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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