



# FARINGDON PEACE GROUP

**NEWSLETTER 32**

**NOV-DEC 2023**

## **OUR NEXT MEETING**

### **GAZA, UKRAINE & BEYOND CURRENT AND FUTURE DRONE WARS**

WEDNESDAY 1st NOVEMBER

via Zoom at 7.30pm

Speaker: Chris Cole

Chris Cole is the founder of Drone UK and the author of many reports and articles on the use of armed drones. He has submitted evidence to various Parliamentary Committees on the issue, including the Defence Select Committee, the Joint Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Arms Export Controls and is regularly invited to speak to conferences, public meetings and the media on drones, targeted killing and remote warfare.

Zoom link if needed:

Meeting ID: 873 4968 9220

Passcode: 422407

---

## **ROTARY PEACE CHAMPION**

A few of us will be meeting up with Mohinder Kainth, who is Rotary Peace Champion for the district.

**Come if you can**

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 3rd at 7.30pm

at 19 Coxwell Road, Faringdon.

---

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

Sat 11 Nov Armistice Day

Sun 12 Nov Remembrance Sunday

### **WEDNESDAY 6th DECEMBER 7.30pm**

FPG MONTHLY MEETING.

**'Our 2050 Net - Zero Commitment:  
Now Pie in the Sky?'**

Speaker: Richard Benwell

Friends Meeting House

### **TUES 5th or TUES 12th DECEMBER**

WOMEN IN BLACK VIGIL

for Peace in Palestine

Faringdon Market Place

---

## **A TIME OF REMEMBRANCE**

**for people of all faiths and none**



**SUNDAY 12th NOVEMBER**

**at 4pm**

at the **QUAKER MEETING HOUSE**

4 Lechlade Road, Faringdon

We will commemorate the victims of war and conflict. There will be a few chosen readings on War, Peace, Remembrance and Reconciliation within about an hour of shared silence.

There will also be a workshop all afternoon mainly for children, to make origami peace cranes. Refreshments to follow.

**PLEASE DO COME!**

---

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY FARINGDON PEACE GROUP**

Supporters of Faringdon Peace Group celebrated its 43<sup>rd</sup> birthday at the AGM in October. Jennie Chesterton, one of the founder members, cut the cake once the business was over.

Established as a response to cruise missiles being based in this country, Faringdon Peace Group has campaigned tirelessly on issues of war, peace and justice ever since. It condemns all violence and is appalled by the ongoing tragedy in Israel/Palestine.

For more information please go to [www.faringdonpeacegroup.org.uk](http://www.faringdonpeacegroup.org.uk)

---

# **CROUGHTON RALLY 2023**

## **SORRY YOU MISSED IT!**

On Saturday 7th October five Supporters of our Peace Group visited the main gate of the United States of America colony in Northamptonshire disguised as 'RAF Croughton'.

The Croughton Rally is part of the annual 'Keep Space for Peace' week and is organised by the Oxfordshire Peace Campaign. (OPC).

In 2016, US Space Command issued a report named 'Vision for 2020'. In this they stated that the US needed to dominate Space. 'Full Spectrum Dominance' is the chilling phrase they use – to be able to fight wars in and from Space, to defend the United State's interests. OPC feels the necessity to raise awareness of US.AF Croughton as being one of the communication bases for these ambitions along with the better-known bases of Menwith Hill and Fylingdales in Yorkshire.

Croughton is an integral part of the US surveillance and listening strategy including utilisation of drones warfare.

So there we were with our banners and flags to also listen – but this time to speakers from the peace movement. The following is from memory, and my impressions of the speakers.

**John Gittings** is a former Foreign Affairs editor for the 'Guardian' and he reminded us why we were at Croughton on this sunny Saturday afternoon. He used the example of the late Pat Arrowsmith and the Committee of 100 and praised us for 'keeping the faith' regarding the elusive concept of 'peace' and what it might mean.

**Tom Unterrainer** is now chair of CND. He spoke of the obscenity of places like Croughton and praised the demonstrators for raising public awareness of such places. He also referred to the situation at U.S.A.F. (?) Lakenheath in Suffolk where there is strong evidence that the US will once again store nuclear weapons at the base.

**Peter Burt** (speaker at our September meeting) from Drone Wars UK spoke of the current development of drones in modern warfare. Frightening stuff! If only the general public were made aware of the situation!. It was also an opportunity for Peter to describe the basis of the Nukewatch initiative which involves volunteers to carry out, as far as possible, surveillance of nuclear convoys travelling on our road and rail system to transfer nuclear materials to and from Burghfield near Reading to Faslane near Glasgow, and Derby (Rolls Royce). Brize Norton airbase is used for transportation to and from the USA. Incidentally, parts of a nuclear convoy got lost and turned up in Faringdon Market Place recently.. Peter's talk will doubtless connect with what Chris Cole has to tell us in his talk on drones, with special reference to the Gaza catastrophe, at our Monthly Meeting on 1st November.

One might ponder the reasons why it is up to a few 'ordinary' people to spread awareness of the weapons that could bring the end of the world.

Why did we spend a glorious Autumn day outside a place where wars are planned? The companionship of other like minded people, all of us there because of our mutual concern about the future, together with the opportunity to listen to very inspirational and compelling speakers, led to a feeling that this was indeed time well spent.

Phil

---

### **UBUNTU**

**Ubuntu** is a Bantu term meaning "humanity". It's sometimes translated as "I am because we are", also, "I am because you are", or "humanity towards others" - "the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity".

---

---

### **ITEMS FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER**

jennyridd@yahoo.co.uk

**by 15th December please.**

Hopefully, next edition *before* Christmas.. I'd really appreciate your contributions in a format that I can easily use

---

## **DRONE WARS UK AND THE M.O.D.**

Drone Wars UK , an NGO that researches Britain's use of drones, reports that the Ministry of Defence has suddenly ceased to respond to Freedom of Information requests. For some years now, the NGO has enabled greater transparency regarding Britain's use of armed drones by reviewing data obtained by means of the Freedom of Information Act. This meant that evidence was provided that in several circumstances about half of Britain's air strikes were carried out using drones.

Chris Coles, founder of Drone Wars UK said "Armed drones lower the threshold for the use of force as political leaders are able to engage in military intervention without risk to their own forces. It is therefore crucial that there is some transparency over where and how armed drones are deployed.'

Drone Wars UK will challenge the MoD at an Information Tribunal.

Jennie.

With thanks to the Morning Star. 26.10.23

**Chris is our speaker on  
Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> November at 7.30pm  
on Zoom -  
faringdonpeacegroup.org.uk for link.  
"Gaza, Ukraine and Beyond: Current and  
Future Drone Wars"**

.....  
"Here's to the bridge-builders,  
the hand-holders,  
the light-bringers,  
those extraordinary souls,  
wrapped in ordinary lives  
who quietly weave threads  
of humanity into an inhumane world.  
They are the unsung heroes in a world  
at war with itself.  
They are the whisperers of hope that  
peace is possible.  
Look for them  
in this present darkness.  
Light your candle  
with their flame.  
And then go.  
Build bridges.  
Hold hands.  
Bring light to a dark  
and desperate world.  
Be the hero you are looking for.  
Peace is possible.  
It begins with us."

L.R. Knost

## **A FEW THOUGHTS ON GAZA**

Like you perhaps, we have received an urgent request from Medical Aid to Palestinians for a donation. This request has set me thinking of writing a piece for our Newsletter on an aspect of the catastrophe in Gaza that is rarely mentioned in reportage. How about some observations on the 'violence of the oppressed'?

It is true that it was about a decade ago that a few members of our Peace Group visited Israel and the Occupied Territory of Palestine and witnessed at first hand some of the oppressive conditions endured by the Palestinians. That situation has changed for the worse in the intervening years but let us get back to the 'violence of the oppressed'.

Let me start by remembering the Mau Mau massacres of farming families in Kenya. Was this the violence of British colonisation and the denial of freedom to the Kenyan people? Was the Algerian war a result of 150 years of French imperialist brutality? Not to mention the so called 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland.

No one should cheer the slaughter in Israel that took place on 7<sup>th</sup> October. Any response that does not attempt to understand the fear Jewish people feel lacks moral imagination, but to forbear from cheering is not to condemn. Those who now denounce Hamas also denounced the unarmed demonstrations at the Gaza border fence in 2018. How many Palestinians, without guns in their hands, died? Was it 223? What about the attempts to criminalise the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign that was formed to pressurize Israel to end its unlawful occupation of the West Bank and the prison camp that is Gaza?

Who denies the Palestinian Authority the right to seek redress at the International Court of Justice?

They demand instead that the Palestinian people acquiesce in their own historical marginalisation.

It appears that the Palestinians must accept and suffer in silence.

Is it too stupid to state that if you cannot stomach 'the violence of the oppressed' then stop the oppression?

I hope that this piece stimulates further discussion.

Phil. 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2023.

## **THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR** **by Bjorn Watson**

In his recent talk to Faringdon Peace Group, Bjorn started by asking the question what is the point of history? Are there lessons we can learn? He then proceeded to serve up an outline of the war with stories about the conflict and its key personalities. His interest was sparked when aged 19 he first encountered George Orwell when his Dad gave him his book "A Homage to Catalonia".

The Spanish Civil War was an extraordinarily brutal conflict that divided in the European Powers in the course of a volatile decade – the 1930s. It developed out of a fiendishly complicated political maelstrom to become ultimately a proxy war between Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Russia. Bjorn gave a thumbnail of the lead up, course and consequences of the Civil War with a few stories along the line.

As well as George Orwell, these included the coup attempt by a renegade Guardia Civil officer in 1981 illustrating the fragile nature of the nascent Spanish democracy, the International Brigades and the bombing of Guernica and its consequences, together with the shabby way the European powers treated the legitimately elected government in Spain.

Although reluctant to accept refugees, Britain took 4,000 Basque children who were looked after and educated in 'colonies', two of which were local to Faringdon: in Aston (opposite the pottery) and also by Lord Faringdon'. The Scottish mother and Spanish father of Michael Portillo met while visiting these children. His father, who had fought for the government, had escaped Spain across the Pyrenees in 1939.

Bjorn finished with an account of the terrible aftermath of the war for millions of the Republican supporters, the Franco years and the coming of democracy.

---

### **FARINGDON PEACE GROUP CONTACTS**

including Speaker info, please contact

**Jennie 01367 710308**

**Karen 01367 241707**

**Dave 01367 240808**

**For newsletter items**  
jennyridd@yahoo.co.uk

**For the website links**  
faringdonpeacegroup.org.uk

---

## **TRACKING NUCLEAR WEAPONS ON OUR ROADS**

In September, Faringdon Peace Group welcomed back Peter Burt, former director of the Nuclear Information Service, now working for Drone Wars UK, to speak to them about tracking nuclear weapons on our roads.

Most people will not know that every 6 to 8 weeks convoys carrying nuclear warheads travel on roads between the south of England and Scotland. The warheads are manufactured and serviced at the Atomic Weapons Establishment in Aldermaston, and stored at the Royal Navy Armaments Depot Coulport, near Helensburgh, before being put on submarines for deployment at sea.

There is a regular cycle of movement between these places for monitoring, servicing and replacing the warheads. There are movements of other nuclear materials between Brize Norton and Rolls Royce Derby where reactor cores are made for nuclear submarines.

The convoys are difficult to miss with armoured police escorts, usually 4 large trucks containing the warheads, a tow truck, fire truck, a customised coach communications centre and other unmarked vehicles containing fleet protection troops. For more than 30 years, Peter has been part of the Nukewatch network: individuals who track the convoys from points all along the various routes they travel in order to carry out 'citizen verification' of the scale of the UK's nuclear arsenal. They follow up with freedom of information requests to clarify their observations.

Nukewatch also plays an important role in highlighting accidents and other safety issues. Earlier this year FPG member Jennie Chesterton witnessed part of a convoy, presumably lost, trying to negotiate Faringdon Market Place and London Street! Although there are emergency arrangements in place, the Ministry of Defence themselves concluded, after an exercise in 2011, that these were inadequate for a major incident. For security reasons Nukewatch is careful not to release information in real time, only reporting after the event. Up till now the government seems willing to tolerate their activities.

With Brize Norton becoming more significant in nuclear transportation, Nukewatch is looking for more volunteers to monitor activity in the local area. If interested please contact Nukewatch on <https://www.nukewatch.org.uk/> or phone 07824 140058. *Karen Vogt*

---

## ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

*We have had a speaker from EAPPI, at one of our monthly meetings, so I thought it worth a mention. Although written from a Quaker perspective, I'm quite sure the sentiments expressed here are shared by most of us.*

### MAJOR ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE IN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

As of 11 October 2023, more than 1,200 people have been killed in Israel and more than 900 in Gaza. Over 2,700 people have been injured in Israel, and 4,250 in Gaza. More than 260,000 Gazans have been displaced from their homes. Up to 200 people have been taken hostage by Hamas. Behind these rising numbers of deaths and casualties are individual lives ended or changed irrevocably. We mourn those lives already lost and call for an immediate de-escalation.

Indiscriminate attacks on civilians are always unjustifiable. They violate international humanitarian law which seeks to limit the harms of war and protect non-combatants. We condemn the Hamas attacks on Israeli civilians and the taking of hostages. We also condemn the violent actions of the Israeli state in Gaza, including airstrikes into areas with high civilian populations, and cutting off water, electricity, and access to humanitarian relief.

We have said before that these cycles of violence must be understood in the context of Israel's military occupation of Palestine, including the blockade on Gaza. The past year has seen record levels of attacks on Palestinian communities, and a sharp increase in human rights violations. This includes demolition of homes and schools, repression of nonviolent protests and mass-arrests.

As Quakers, we place equal value on every human life and see that the structural violence of the occupation damages all people of the region. We believe the situation can only be resolved when the occupation has ended and the inherent equality, dignity and worth of all is realised.

It is time for everyone – including the international community – to recognise that no military solution will bring a permanent end to violence. Only a just peace based on international law can do that. We urge the UK government and international leaders to ensure humanitarian access and response. We call for a ceasefire and release of hostages to prevent further loss of life and suffering for Israelis and Palestinians.

### QUAKERS IN BRITAIN HAVE A LONG HISTORY OF WORKING FOR PEACE IN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

As part of this commitment, Quakers manage the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), on behalf of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and other partner agencies. This work has built a body of experience across Britain Yearly Meeting, and has led to national decisions and actions based on our Quaker commitments to peace, justice and integrity.

In 2011, Quakers in Britain agreed a national position to boycott products from the Israeli settlements in the West Bank. The settlements are illegal under international law. Quakers consider that this boycott is a non-violent move for peace for Israelis and Palestinians. Divestment and sanctions were not taken forward.

In 2014, Britain's largest Quaker decision-making body, Yearly Meeting Gathering, issued a statement, calling on the UK government to take more concerted action for peace in Palestine and Israel. This included calling on the British government to recognise the state of Palestine on the same basis as it recognises the state of Israel.

As part of Quaker policy it was announced that the church will not invest any of its centrally-held funds in companies profiting from the occupation of Palestine.

### SOME VITAL STATISTICS

#### Some Population densities worth noting:

Globally:	62 people per sq Km
Oxfordshire:	37 people per sq Km
Israel:	400 people per sq Km
Gaza:	5,555 people per sq Km
Singapore, Hong Kong, Macao and one or two others are more densely populated than Gaza.	

#### And Land Areas?

London covers	1572 sq Km
Oxfordshire	2605 sq km
Gaza	365 sq km

*These figures differ slightly from site to site, but I think it gives a good idea.*



## SWINDONIANS GATHER TO SUPPORT PALESTINIANS IN GAZA WAR

At 5.30, Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> of October Swindon people gathered outside the main library in Regent's Circus in a vigil to highlight the plight of the Palestinian population suffering the constant bombardment by Israeli Defence Forces in retaliation for the deaths of Israeli citizens at the hands of the Hamas armed fighters. The attack by Hamas fighters resulted in an incursion into Israel on 7<sup>th</sup> October and was supported by thousands of rocket attacks on Israeli cities. Some 205 Israeli civilians were taken as hostages into Gaza although some have now been released unharmed.

Israel started its 'defence' by carpet bombing the densely populated northern Gaza in retaliation and revenge. The indiscriminate bombing has seen hospitals, schools, shelters and essential infrastructure destroyed as well as civilians homes, as the Israelis claim that Hamas terrorist tunnels are beneath these areas. Inevitably, thousands of Palestinians have been killed including over 3000 children.

The Israelis have cut off all power, fuel, food, water and medical aid from reaching Gaza and have told the population to evacuate to the south of the already densely populated area where there is also a level of bombing and no food, water, shelter or power either.

The vigil was organised by Solidarity Swindon, an amalgamation of organizations and individuals who attempt to provide support for those who suffer victimisation and oppression both locally and globally.

Despite the, at times, torrential rain, over 100 people gathered outside the library then moved to the Nando steps to accommodate the growing numbers of people. Many Palestinian flags were waved and the chants of 'Free, free Palestine' and 'From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free' reverberated around the area along with supportive horns from passing motorists.

There were a number of good speeches explaining the history of the area and the terrible suffering of the Palestinian people not just during this war but on a daily basis.

A number of police officers were present, filming the event but there was no trouble and very little interaction with the crowd. Over £640 was raised for Medical Aid. A further event and march will be held on November 4<sup>th</sup>.

A couple of Helen's photos, taken at the Croughton rally



And lastly, Faringdon Peace Group wishing themselves a Happy Birthday, or, more accurately, celebrating 43 years of campaigning for Peace

*Photo: Al Cane*

