



FARINGDON PEACE GROUP

NEWSLETTER 33

JAN - FEB 2024

NEW YEAR PARTY

Social get-together to celebrate the New Year
Karen and Sjoerd's
7 Leamington Drive, Faringdon SN7 7JZ

WEDNESDAY 3rd JANUARY at 7pm

All welcome.

Please bring vegetarian food and drink to share
*Let's hope that 2024 is the year in which
we make progress towards Peace.*

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**Several of us wrote to our MP, asking him
to support the vote for Ceasefire in Gaza.**

The following is part of a response from MP
David Johnston OBE, to a letter sent to him
from Karen.

'The UK has also deployed significant military
support to the region to help facilitate the
humanitarian response and mitigate escalation
of the conflict.'

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MONTHLY MEETING

WEDNESDAY 7th FEBRUARY at 7.30pm
Venue To be arranged. Zoom or FMH

**THE RED CROSS, SWITZERLAND AND
THE FRANCO PRUSSIAN WAR**

Speaker Dr. Peter Foot

Peter taught postgraduate-level strategy,
defence economics and military history in six
universities for over 30 years. Now retired, he
lives in Faringdon

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FARINGDON PEACE GROUP CONTACTS

including Speaker info, please contact

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Dave 01367 240808

For newsletter items
jennyridd@yahoo.co.uk

For the website links
faringdonpeacegroup.org.uk

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BOOK THIS DATE!

Following a meeting with Mohinder Kainth, the
Rotary Peace Champion for the district those
present decided that it might be a good idea
to make Peace more of an issue locally, so we
proposed holding a 'Big Meeting' in the Corn
Exchange, in May next year. We have met
again as a group to further discuss, but the
next meeting is the one when decisions need
to be made.

Everyone is welcome to this, on
WEDNESDAY 24th JANUARY
at 19 Coxwell Road, Faringdon
at 2pm

If you are able to let me know if you are
coming, that would be helpful.
Jenny (jennyridd@yahoo.co.uk)

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SINCE OUR LAST MEETING

On a sunny day, Saturday 11th Nov, we held a
vigil for Gaza. Twelve people took part and a
new supporter joined us.

On Tuesday 5th December we held a Women
in Black Vigil for Peace in Palestine. This time
it was cold so we stood under the Old Town
Hall. Ten women and men and again a new
supported joined the group.

Jennie

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BRISTOL CAMPAIGNERS TARGET ELBIT

over its complicity in the genocide
of Palestinian people.

"We must remind ourselves that while the
bombs that are dropped may be thousands of
miles away, the offices where they are
ordered are just the other side of the
motorway."

THANK YOU to those who have
contributed to this and past newsletters.
Please continue to send in your contributions
jennyridd@yahoo.co.uk

SWINDONIANS GATHER TO SUPPORT PALESTINIANS IN GAZA WAR

At 5.30, Wednesday, 18th 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 7th 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 was scheduled for November 4th.

UK GOVERNMENT INVITES SOME OF THE WORLD'S WORST HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSING NATIONS TO BUY WEAPONS AT LONDON ARMS FAIR

The list of countries invited to this year's DSEI shows this government's utter disdain for human rights around the world



11 November 2023

REMEMBRANCE DAY

After the Service held in the Market Square, members of the Faringdon Peace Group held a silent vigil for those victims in the current war between Israel and Gaza. We wore both red and white poppies. Petitions called for 'A Cease Fire' and 'Peace'.

Due to Government concern about possible unrest with hundreds of people demonstrating throughout the UK in support of a cease fire and possible withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, the Peace Group felt it necessary to keep a low profile, but were clear as to intention.

However, two members of the public made it known we were not welcome to show our support for peace; one was brusque in his opinion, and the other peaceful in manner who requested we desist for two days to give people time to reflect on historic losses. It was pointed out by Peace Group members that we grieve our losses every day, and that we would like peace just as anyone does. We stated that the route we prefer is through diplomacy, and that the word Armistice means a formal agreement of warring parties to stop fighting. People attending Armistice Day and those demanding peace are in accordance.

Sand

WOMEN IN BLACK – AGAINST VIOLENCE, FOR PEACE WITH JUSTICE

On Saturday 28th October three of us (Helen, Karen and Jill) from Faringdon Peace Group travelled to Oxford to join their Women in Black vigil at the Martyrs' Memorial. We were warmly welcomed and given placards promoting peace to hold for passers-by to read. The vigil lasted from 2 to 3 p.m. and quite a few people did stop to read them and then asked questions.

After the vigil we walked along to the Quaker Meeting House for a welcome cup of tea or coffee, cake and biscuits in a warm room. We learned that the Oxford group meet weekly, not always silently, but explain why they are there and what they stand for. The placards varied from "Peace" with a dove to smaller pictures about violence towards women. We said that up to now we always had a silent vigil with placards, about the plight of Bethlehem. The men supported by handing out leaflets about war, and discussing with those who wanted to share their views.

It was a very interesting meeting because another person, Sue Finch, had travelled up from London to talk about a book recently published by Merlin Press, with the title as written above. The book was written by two women, the late Cynthia Cockburn and Sue plus others. Before she died, Cynthia had asked Sue to complete the book; she gave her the first five chapters and over 20 loose files of information to complete the remaining two chapters. Others also helped and Sue came to tell us about it. It looks a very interesting read with chapters on Women in Black's work in different countries.

Women in Black began in Israel in 1988, prompted by the Palestinian intifada uprising of late 1987 with an appeal to end the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. .

Women in Black also had a productive partnership with Jewish Israeli women in the occupied territories.

Women in the US held a vigil six months later and so it began to spread to other countries and is used by others in different ways. Women in Black is not an organisation but a formula for action and now active in twenty other countries. They meet together in conferences in person and by Zoom. The Oxford Women in Black group were considering whether the UK could organise the next conference.

In the book there was more information about Oxford Women in Black. They mostly demonstrate in a central area, or sometimes a shopping street (like Cornmarket St) usually on a Saturday morning. At Christmas they sing carols relating to Israel's s occupation of Palestinian land, the siege of Gaza and arming of Israel by our government. Men are encouraged to support by giving out leaflets, the same as in Faringdon. It was an interesting and inspiring time.

We had our next vigil in Faringdon on the morning of Tuesday, 5th December, in the Market Place with nine women present and men to give out leaflets. People did take and read them. It was a wet and misty morning so we stood under the Old Town Hall with our placards asking for a "ceasefire now" and "Give peace a chance". It was a more open vigil, because for the first time we weren't silent all the time.

We also sang "O Little Town of Bethlehem" with new words to show the state the little town is now in. The last lines read "The hopes and dreams that peace will come are caught in death's enthal".

Jill Headey

**WOMEN
IN
BLACK**



**IN
Bonn
Square
OXFORD**

PROTEST IS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

It is reported in the Guardian that a climate activist has been jailed for six months for taking part in a peaceful slow march protest on a London road.

“Section 7 of the Public Order Act 2023 bans any act that prevents newspaper printing presses, power plants, oil and gas extraction or distribution sites, airports, railways or roads “from being used or operated to any extent” with a potential penalty of 12 months in jail.

The human rights organisation Liberty criticised the sentencing. Katy Watts, a lawyer at Liberty, said “It is shocking to see such harsh sentences handed down to protesters. This is yet another unnecessary and draconian law introduced by a government that is hell-bent on discouraging people for standing up for what they believe in. It is a clear attempt to silence people and for the government to hide from all accountability.”

“Protest is a fundamental right, not a gift from the state. Government should be protecting our right to protest, not criminalising it”.

With thanks to *The Guardian* 16.12.23

SWINDONIANS GATHER AND MARCH TO SUPPORT PALESTINIANS IN GAZA OFFENSIVE

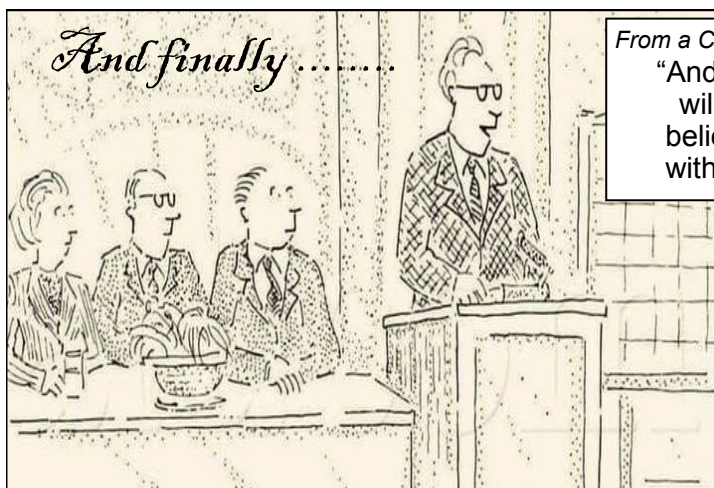
At 11am on Saturday, 16th of December, Swindon people gathered at the entrance to The Lawns in Old Town where supporters were able to buy some Palestinian products to raise money for humanitarian aid. The stall was run by a Palestinian family and the money sent straight to Gaza.

The march was 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 march called for an immediate cease fire to prevent more deaths of civilians by the Israeli forces.

There was an enabling Police presence which were also there to ensure that no one infringed the new tougher rules concerning protests. The route of the march took the crowd of more than 100 people along Wood Street where the march halted for speeches outside Robert Buckland’s office, the South Swindon MP. We heard from a woman whose grandparents had escaped from Palestine at the time of the first Intifada. She explained how difficult it was to return to visit family and impossible to return to live there. Shouts of ‘Shame, shame’ were heard as we were reminded that the UK had abstained from the recent UN vote calling for a ceasefire.

The usual chants of free, free Palestine echoed along the street as the march moved on to stop again outside the BBC Wiltshire office to complain about the quality of reporting of the ongoing genocide. The march then continued down Victoria Road and stopped in Regents Circus for more speeches. We heard that Swindon had raised over £50,000 and was the first town or city in England to send an equipped ambulance to Palestine.

The vigil was organised by Swindon Palestine Solidarity, an amalgamation of organisations and individuals who are raising awareness and fundraising to provide support for Palestinians. More marches and events are planned for the new year including a film night. *Helen*



From a Canadian Facebook page

“And so, while the end-of-the-world scenario will be rife with unimaginable horrors, we believe that the pre-end period will be filled with unprecedented opportunities for profit.

*A Happy Christmas to
all - and dare we hope for
a Peaceful New Year?*