

NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE NETWORK NEWSLETTER

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NVRN, Mordechai Vanunu House, 162 Holloway Road, London N7 8DQ;
tel. 07539-321 118; E-mail: davidtrpolden1@gmail.com

Editor: David Polden.

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CROCODILE TEARS

Many countries, including the UK and US, have deplored the enormous loss of life and destruction in Gaza wrought by the ongoing Israeli attack and called on Israel to try to avoid civilian casualties.

Indeed, the Gaza Health Ministry reported on January 30, 26,637 people, mostly civilians, had been killed in Gaza by the Israeli military since the start of the war, including over 1,600 children, but not the thousands of corpses thought trapped under the rubble of destroyed buildings and not currently recoverable. The Ministry also claimed that over half of the buildings in Gaza have been destroyed or badly damaged.

Yet this concern, at least in the cases of the US and UK, is no more than crocodile tears, as both countries continue to support Israeli's attack on Gaza, both in word, citing Israel's "right to self-defence", and deed - continuing to supply weapons to Israel which will presumably be used to kill more children and other civilians in Gaza.

Not content with complicity in Israel's mass killing of civilians in Gaza, the US, the UK and some others, while admitting the great need Gaza has for aid, have decided to stop all aid to the *United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East* (UNWRA), which is responsible for organising virtually all aid to Gaza. So, not only are the US and UK supporting the Israeli attack on Gaza, they are much reducing UNWRA's ability to help the victims of these attacks. There is an enormous need for such aid with a nearly total Israeli blockade of supplies of water, food, fuel, medicine and medical equipment, the bombing of hospitals and schools and the population being forced into smaller and smaller areas of Gaza. All this has meant people dying of treatable injuries and diseases, diseases that are



Results of attack on Jabalia refugee camp, Gaza, viewed from Israel, 30/10/23.

increasing because of people being crowded together, as well as mass starvation. Israel has been allowing a small amount of aid in, but much less than that required even before the outbreak of the war, and the continual attacks on Gaza and the great destruction there makes distribution very difficult.

This cessation of aid from the US, UK, Germany and others followed the recent allegation by Israel that 12 of the people working for UNWRA took part in the October 7th Hamas attack on Israel, though apparently it has not given UNWRA its evidence for this allegation. I'm not sure why it should be a surprise that some members of Hamas might wish to help give humanitarian support to the people of Gaza, or why UNWRA should not use their services, knowingly or unknowingly, but UNWRA immediately sacked 9 of the 12 (two others were dead and one was no longer employed.) But this was not enough to stop many countries cutting off aid to punish UNWRA and through them the people of Gaza. David Polden

IS ISRAEL COMMITTING GENOCIDE IN GAZA?

This is the question that the UN's *International Court of Justice* (ICJ), otherwise known as the World Court,

was asked to decide on January 10, when South Africa brought an accusation of genocide against Israel over

its current war in Gaza under the Genocide Convention passed in 1948 by the United Nations.

This rules in section GC2 say that:

“Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such:

(a) Killing members of the group;

(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.



The 17 judges presiding at the Genocide allegation hearing

There is no doubt that Israel is responsible for a), b) and c) in Gaza. The only question is whether these actions were carried out with the “*intention...to destroy in whole, or in part...*” the Palestinian people of Gaza.

Prosecution case put by lawyers for South Africa

The lawyers acting for South Africa cited as evidence of the charge of genocide: 1) The killing of so many people, mostly women and children, by Israeli bombing during the attack on Gaza; 2) The bodily and mental harm caused through the bombing and the Israeli blockade; 3) The “chilling, overwhelming and incontrovertible” evidence of intent to commit genocide, citing statements by Mr Netanyahu and other ministers and key figures that dehumanise Palestinians or refuse to distinguish between Hamas fighters and civilians. These statements included Netanyahu and other ministers invoking the Old Testament tale of Amalek: God commanded the Jews to destroy the Amaleks, without sparing anyone; the

defence minister, Yoav Gallant, speaking of Palestinians as “human animals” and the Israeli president, Isaac Herzog, saying that “It’s an entire nation out there that is responsible.”

To Israeli claims that it is acting on self-defence in its attack on Gaza, South Africa’s lawyers argued that self-defence can never justify action that amounts to genocide.

The prosecution called on the court to order an immediate ceasefire in Gaza to end the genocide.

Defence case by Israel’s lawyers

Israel's deputy attorney general for international law, Gilad Noam, making Israel’s closing statement, said South Africa’s case against Israel made the nation look like a state “singularly consumed with destroying an entire population. That is patently false.”

He went on to claim that compliance with the law was woven deeply into the fabric of the Israeli military apparatus and a core component of the Israeli state

since the war that led to Israel's creation. "When the cannons roar in Gaza, the law is not silent," Noam said. "This has been the case since 1948."

In reply to South Africa's legal team pointing to statements made by top Israeli officials as demonstrating "genocidal intent" by Israel's leadership, Noam claimed that Israel has no tolerance for statements calling for harm to civilians in Gaza and that the Israeli justice system could consider them to be incitement.

Noam said an order by the court asking Israel to halt hostilities in Gaza would lead to a "perverse situation" in which Hamas would continue to attack citizens of Israel, hold about 136 hostages in the Gaza Strip and prevent displaced Israelis from returning to their homes. It would also set a precedent, he said, in which militant groups like Hamas would turn to the international court for protection.

"Yes, there is a heart-wrenching armed conflict," Noam said. "But the attempt to classify it as genocide will turn an instrument adopted by international community to prevent horrors of the kind that shocked the conscience of humanity during the Holocaust into a weapon in the hands of terrorist groups who have no regard for humanity or the law."

Court ruling

On 26th January the ICJ issued an "interim ruling". In this it failed to uphold the charge of genocide against Israel (This was left for a decision at a "final ruling" which it is said will take perhaps years to arrive at.) It also failed to call for an end to hostilities.

However it did call on Israel to do the following:

- 1) Take all measures within its power to prevent all acts within the scope of Genocide Convention article 2
- 2) Immediately ensure that its military does not commit acts within the scope of article 2
- 3) Direct and punish all members of the public who engage in the incitement of genocide against Palestinians.
- 4) Ensure provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian aid.
- 5) Prevent the destruction of, and ensure the preservation of, evidence on allegation of acts of GC2.
- 6) Israel told to submit report as to how they're adhering to these orders to the ICJ within a month.

The 17 judges presiding upheld all these rulings by a majority of either 15-2 or 16-1, with the Israeli and Ugandan judges alone being responsible for casting votes against.

The ICJ also called for the immediate release of all hostages by Hamas.

In response to this ruling Israel officials accused the ICJ (and presumably the 15 judges from all over the world who voted for all parts of the resolution) of anti-Semitic bias and Netanyahu described it as a "...vile attempt to deny Israel this fundamental right [to self-defence] is blatant discrimination against the Jewish state...and decent people everywhere should reject it".

Meanwhile, reaction to the war has led to much military action elsewhere in the Middle East. Hezbollah rocket attacks on Israel from Lebanon and by Israel on Hezbollah units in Lebanon have increased since October 7 and Israel has evacuated people from an area south of the border for their safety.



Aerial view of US base "Tower 22" in Jordan where 3 US soldiers were killed in a drone attack on 28/1

The Houthi rebel government in Yemen have, in support of Gaza, been attacking shipping in the Red Sea making for Israel and on US and UK warships on patrol there, and recently the US and UK have retaliated by bombing targets claimed to be military in Yemen.

Israel had already been targeting Hamas and other alleged Iranian-supported groups' facilities and leaders in Syria and Iraq, which had been attacking US military bases there, though without causing casualties - until January 28th when three US soldiers were killed and more than 30 injured by a drone attack on a US base in Jordan. In retaliation the US has been bombing many alleged terrorist facilities in Syria and Iraq, not this time joined by the UK or any other country. The US has not however attacked military facilities in Iran, with it seems the aim of trying to avoid direct war with that country.

The Gaza conflict is nevertheless clearly in danger of sparking a much larger conflict in the Middle East.

PA CAMPAIGN AGAINST COMPANIES ARMING ISRAEL

Our regular round-up of the Palestine Action (PA) campaign over the last two months begins with some successes.

On December 14, PA received an email from Fisher German, property managers for Israel's largest weapons manufacturer, Elbit Systems, that they had ceased acting as property managers for Elbit's drone



Elbit 8 and supporters outside Court

The UK's Crown Prosecution Service could order the retrial of the defendants on charges the jury was unable to reach a verdict on but do not appear to have done so by the deadline for this.

A defendant, Nicola Stickells, mother of two, asked "How can we be the criminals when the perpetrators of... [what] we now know is a genocide ... are free to profit and we have to spend weeks and weeks in court for an action that we took three years ago? When you try and stand for human rights, you become the criminal. This is not right."

On January 8 the four-week trial began at Bristol Crown Court of seven activists charged with burglary and criminal damage for entering, occupying and damaging Elbit's Bristol headquarters in May 2022, forcing it to close down.

After the action, all of the activists had been remanded to prison, five being released shortly after. However, two of them, both anti-Zionist Jewish activists, were detained for a month, thought to be due to Israeli Embassy intervention. The two were then kept under electronic monitoring for a year, while all seven faced strict bail conditions restricting their movement and communications.

No news yet of the trial having ended.

PA have been very active in January

On the 15th five activists were released on bail after they were arrested for alleged "conspiracy to commit public nuisance" at the London Stock Exchange after a journalist infiltrated the group and shopped them and

factory at Shenstone. Fisher German's decision follows hot on the heels of a similar one by Elbit's former recruiters iO Associates who had informed PA, also by e-mail, that they had stopped being recruiters for Elbit. These decisions follow a strong campaign of non-violent direct action by PA against these firms.

On December 22, after a six-week trial, a jury at Snaresbrook Crown Court acquitted eight PA activists, known as the "Elbit 8", of a total of 12 charges, which included criminal damage, burglary and encouraging criminal damage.

Two of the defendants were acquitted of all charges; four were formally acquitted on a charge of encouraging others to commit criminal damage, after the prosecution offered no evidence. The jury failed to reach a majority decision regarding the remaining 23 charges, though the CPS may order a retrial in these cases

Richard Barnard, co-founder of PA, however, was found guilty of criminal damage to the now-closed Oldham Elbit factory by a 10-2 majority, with at least one of the 10 jurors who voted "guilty" refused permission to change their verdict, which would have resulted in a hung jury. Richard is appealing.

their plans for action there Only one of them has yet been charged.

The same day several Barclays sites across Britain were targeted with protests & actions. This is due to Barclay's support for companies, including Elbit, supplying arms to Israel. Red paint was sprayed all over the the Manchester building. Also in Manchester, activists occupied the lobby of BNY Mellon who invest millions in Elbit. In Birmingham the front doors were super-glued shut. Another investor in Elbit, Scotia Bank was sprayed with red paint.

On the 16th, PA targeted the offices in London and Glasgow of Mileway, landlords of Elbit's Systems drones factories. Actionists smashed glass, sprayed paint and left messages such as 'Evict Elbit' and 'Free Gaza' on the company offices.

Also on the 16th, PA targeted Kuehne and Nagel (K+N) and Palletline, logistics companies employed by Elbit. At their premises in Milton Keynes, London and Glasgow, activists sprayed the premises with red paint and broke windows. On 2nd February PA reported that K+N had cut their ties with Elbit.

On the 18th, PA and Bristol-based group "Rise Up for Palestine", shut down the Elbit weapons company headquarters in Bristol by locking-on across the only entrance. And on the 20th, PA activists covered Twickenham Stadium in red paint, hours before the Defence IQ's "International Armoured Vehicles' expo was due to commence.

And on February 5, PA activists broke windows at and covered with red paint the offices of CDW, technology suppliers for Elbit.

TORIES' RWANDA OBSESSION CONTINUES

The UK's plan to resettle some "illegal" migrants 4000 mile away in Rwanda was first announced by Boris Johnson in April 2022. The same month a "Migration and economic development partnership" agreement was signed between the UK and Rwanda. Under this, the UK paid Rwanda £140m for it agreeing to take migrants from the UK to be consider for asylum and resettlement there, but not return them to the UK whether given asylum in Rwanda or not.

The UK paid Rwanda another £100m in 2023 to continue the arrangement and promised another £50m in 2024 for the same purpose. In addition the UK agreed to fund each refugee sent to Rwanda with between £20,000 and £30,000 for relocation and temporary accommodation. The number Rwanda would take was not specified, but Rwanda has made an initial provision to take 200. This doesn't stop the Home Office claiming that over 33,000 asylum seekers are scheduled to be sent to Rwanda.

The government responded to the Supreme Court ruling by introducing on December 9th a Bill entitled, *The Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill* which simply declares that Rwanda is a safe country!

This Bill passed through the Commons unamended, in spite of opposition and amendments from right-wing Tories who argued that the bill was not tough enough in that it didn't stop migrants scheduled to be sent to Rwanda appealing to the European Court of Human Rights. In the end the bill passed its 3rd reading oh January 17 with 11 Conservatives voting against. The two Tory deputy chairs had resigned in order to vote for two defeated amendments to "toughen up" the bill.

When the Rwanda Bill first came before the House of Lords on 29th January, it was passed by 214-171 votes, but strong speeches against by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Ken Clarke and others may spell trouble for the bill in the Lords during its committee stage.

Clearly accepting that just declaring Rwanda a safe country wouldn't make it one, and that the Supreme Court would very likely still find Rwanda to be unsafe, the UK and Rwanda had signed a formal treaty on 5th December to replace the previous memorandum of understanding between the two.

Unlike the memorandum the treaty set out safeguards and assurances about how people removed from the UK to Rwanda will be treated, and how their claims to asylum will be handled. In particular the treaty provides that Rwanda cannot send a relocated individual (even if not granted refugee status) to any other country – except back to the UK, if the UK so requests. There is also to be an independent monitoring committee, a joint committee to discuss best practice, and a new appeal body.

The first flight to Rwanda under the plan received legal clearance from the High Court of Justice and was scheduled for 14 June 2022.

The upshot was that with eight refugees aboard a plane sitting on the tarmac chartered to fly them to Rwanda, the flight was stopped at the last minute by an interim order from the European Court of Human Rights stopping the deportations until the conclusion of legal action in the UK regarding the plan. (Others originally put on the plane had been removed after lawyers had won injunctions staying their deportation to Rwanda.)

At the end of 2022, the High Court further ruled that though the plan was lawful, the individual cases of eight asylum seekers due to be deported that year had to be reconsidered. The Court of Appeal overruled the High Court on 29 June 2023 ruling the plan was unlawful. This ruling was upheld by the UK Supreme Court on November 15, mainly on the grounds that the UK government could not guarantee that Rwanda would uphold their human rights and was safe.



The voyage to England

However, if Rwanda breaks the safeguards and assurances it seems the only sanction the UK possesses is to stop sending asylum seekers (and many more millions of pounds) there under the scheme.

A Cabinet meeting on January 25, approved a bill ratifying this migration treaty between Rwanda and the UK, but, as a formal treaty it also requires ratification by both houses of parliament. This bill does not yet seem to have been put before parliament to approve.

Meanwhile, not all things are rosy on the good container ship *Bibby Stockholm*, the government's brainwave to save money on housing asylum seekers, though it is in fact proving more expensive than housing them in hotels. So far only one asylum seeker has been reported to have been driven to suicide by the conditions on board, but a delegation of MPs to the

ship in January found that overcrowded conditions on the ship put the mental health of asylum seekers at risk, with six men expected to share a small room

designed for one. The boat currently houses about 300 asylum seekers, out of the 500 originally planned.

JSO CONTINUE CAMPAIGN IN COURT & PRISON

In the last two months, 15 *Just Stop Oil* (JSO) environmental activists have been found not guilty by district judges at Stratford Magistrates' Court in three cases in which they had been charged with wilful obstruction of the highway

Four JSO activists who took part in a blockade of Piccadilly in October 2022, to demand that the government halt all licensing and consent for the development of any new fossil fuel projects in the UK, were acquitted on November 25 by a judge at the court; on December 6, seven more JSO activists who had disrupted traffic at St. George's Circus on October 13, 2022 were found not guilty and on January 9 another four who had taken part in a blockade of Parliament Square with 60 others on October 4 2022 were also acquitted.

In these cases, the defendants used the Ziegler case precedent. In the Ziegler case it was ruled by the UK Supreme Court in June 2021 that in judging a case involving protest causing disruption or obstruction the court had to balance the right to protest enshrined in article 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights, to which the UK is a party, against the scale of disruption or obstruction caused.. The district judges in the three cases ruled that the right to protest outweighed the minor obstruction caused. In the third case the judge even commented that the defendants' motivations "could not be more important".

However on 14th November Stephen Gingell, 57, was sentenced to six months for taking part in a slow march in Holloway Road in North London with about 40 others the previous day. He was found guilty of breach of section 7 of the *Public Order Act 2023* that bans any act that prevents a large range of national infrastructures such as roads from being "used or operated to any extent".

In December two JSO activists who had been spent periods in prison were released. On the 12th, Morgan Trowland was released from Highpoint Prison in Suffolk after serving 14 months of a three-year sentence for causing a public nuisance by preventing traffic on the Dartford crossing, along with Marcus Decker, by climbing onto a gantry over it in October 2022 and staying up there for 37 hours. Marcus had been sentenced to a 2-year 7-month sentence and, as he is of German nationality is being kept in prison awaiting deportation to Germany. A petition calling for the deportation to be stopped got 146,000 signatures. ("Public nuisance", became a crime under the *Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022*. It carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison.. A rather draconian sentence for holding up traffic!)

And on December 13, Cressie Gethin, 21, was released from Stratford Magistrates court after spending 23 days on remand at HMP Bronzefield, before her case was discontinued by the CPS, with no reason given. She had been charged with wilful obstruction of the highway after taking part in a slow march of 20 students from Trafalgar Square to Parliament Square in central London when they were



Leaving court on December 6 after 7 found not guilty

all arrested by police. Cressie was taken to a nearby police station to spend the night, before being taken to Westminster Magistrates' Court where she stated, "I have a moral duty to remain in resistance given the scale of this crisis", which led to the judge remanding her in custody to await trial.

Cressie had also joined Morgan and Marcus in climbing onto a gantry over the Dartford Crossing in October 2022 and has also been charged with causing a public nuisance. Her trial on this charge began on February 5 at Isleworth Crown Court and is due to last a week. Two other JSO supporters who joined the other three over the Dartford Crossing have pleaded guilty to causing a public nuisance, they are due to be sentenced by the 20th of February.

The main recent actions by JSO involved another five weeks of daily slow marches ending on December 2nd. In the first two weeks of these marches, already 470 people had been arrested 630 times between them.

Actions since then have been rather sparse.

Five people from an allied group *Injunction Injustice* disrupted a corporate presentation event at the offices of the law firm DLA Piper on December 5. They displayed banners, spoke to guests and entered the foyer of the building before being ejected by security guards. The city law firm is profiting the most from the civil law injunctions brought by the government against *Insulate Britain*, *Stop HS2* and JSO.

On December 14 JSO supporters gathered outside Keir Starmer's house to sing "climate-criminal" Christmas

carols and deliver a letter demanding that, as the likely leader of the next UK government, he gives a commitment to cancel all new oil and gas licences, including those already greenlit by the current government. They were ordered by police to disperse under section 42 of the *Criminal, Justice and Police Act 2001*.

Judicial Review of government's plan to open a massive new oilfield in the North Sea

On January 24 it was reported that *Greenpeace* and another climate campaign *Uplift* have launched separate legal challenges to the Rosebank development planned in the North Sea, the UK's biggest untapped oilfield. They will argue that the Rosebank development is incompatible with the UK's legally-binding climate commitments and say government minister's original analysis ignored the devastating impact of burning oil from the site.

COMING EVENTS

February

10, Bromley, 2.30pm: "Ceasefire Now" in Gaza. Vigil in Market Square by Darwin Mural. Info: 020-8460 1295, or e-mail: anncgarratt@yahoo.com

13, Online, 2pm: "Global NATO and AUKUS – war policy in Southeast Asia." Webinar to discuss "global NATO" and its influence on US, Eurasia, Australia and SE Asia. Speakers include Kate Hudson. Org: *Global Women for Peace United Against NATO*. Info: Jan Harper 07591082195; Jan harper 20211@outlook.com :

14, Liverpool: "Disarming the Heart." Annual walk and prayer through the streets of Liverpool calling for nuclear disarmament and promoting active nonviolence. Assemble 1.30pm on steps of St Luke's Church, top of Bold Street, Liverpool City Centre.

20-21, London, 8.30am on Mass Protest outside High Court in the Strand where Julian Assange will be making probably his final appeal against deportation to the US.

22, London, 6pm: "Why War?" Meeting on war and the role of war reporting. At The Conduit, 6 Langley Street WC2H. Tickets: <https://tinyurl.com/yqfyprms>

24, Online, 2pm: "Ukraine: how to stop this war." International really hosted and organised by CND and Stop the War. Speakers include Jeremy Corbyn, Medea Benjamin, Lindsey German and Tom Unterrainer. See web for registration details.

26, Online, 6.30pm: "Lakenheath: its role in the US war machine." What does US nuclear weapons returning to UK mean? Speakers include Kate Hudson and Hans Kristensen (*Federation of American Scientists*),

27, Online, 6-8pm: "Avoiding a Broader Middle East War – Building Bridges for Peace between Israel-Palestine." <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3482765417?pwd=dXI1WXJRUS9TbHowWVhVNDVVMRIR5QT0...Meeting ID: 348 276 5417; Passcode: 2022. Free. Please register by emailing to vijay@vmpeace.org>

March

10, Sheffield, 1pm: Yorkshire CND Strategy and Planning Meeting. At: The Rutland Arms, 86 Brown Street S1 2BS

On January 22, *Fossil Free London*, *JSO*, *Extinction Rebellion* (XR) and *Scientists for XR* supporters staged a demonstration against the *Offshore Petroleum Licensing Bill*, which was having its second reading at the House of Commons. The Bill, if passed, would allow fossil fuel corporations to bid for new licences to exploit new gas and oil fields in the North Sea.

Regular events

Second full weekend each month, Aldermaston: Women's Peace Camp. Info: 07852 293 386

Every Saturday, Thamesmead. noon-2pm: Vigil and leafletting for Assange outside Belmarsh Prison (244 or 380 buses from Woolwich Arsenal station. Organised *Don't Extradite Assange*, www.dontextraditeassange.com

Every Saturday, Edinburgh, 1-2pm: Women in Black vigil against war and militarism. At east end of Princes Street, outside Register House. Info: wibe@yahoogroups.co.uk

Every Saturday, Oxford, 2-3pm: Women in Black silent Peace Vigil at the Martyrs' Memorial, bottom of St Giles, Contact: oxfordwib@gmail.com to go on our WhatsApp group for up to date information about forthcoming vigils.

1st Saturday of every other month, Menwith Hill, 2-3pm: Quaker meeting at Nessfield Gate on the B645. Bring chair. Contact: barbaraaepenny@gmail.com

Every Tuesday, Menwith Hill, 6-7pm: outside main gate of US spy base on A59 road. Org. Menwith Accountability Campaign, <https://www.themhac.uk>. Contact: Sarah Swift, sswift64@gmail.com

Every Wednesday, London, 6-7pm: Women in Black silent vigil against militarism and war by the Edith Cavell statue in St. Martin's Place, London WC2. Wear black. www.london.womeninblack.org

Every Wednesday, Faslane, 3.10pm walk from Faslane Peace Camp to base for vigil from 4-5pm. (Bus from Helensburgh passes peace camp at 3pm.)

Every Friday, Brighton, 1-2pm: Women in Black vigil at the War Memorial, Old Steine, Brighton. Contact: brightonwib@11qp.co.uk

Third Thursday of month, London. 6.30pm: London CAAT meeting to organise against the arms trade. Info: londoncaat@riseup.net

Last Friday of month: "No Fukushimas Here." 11am-12.30pm: Vigil outside Japanese Embassy, 101-104 Piccadilly; 1-1.30pm: vigil outside Tokyo Electric Power Company, 15-16, Holborn EC1. Org. Kick Nuclear. Info: Shigeo: shigeokobayashi80@msn.com