



FARINGDON PEACE GROUP

NEWSLETTER 37

SEPT-OCT 2024

“We hope for peace, we pray for peace, we work for peace”.

FARINGDON PEACE GROUP CONTACTS

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NEXT MONTHLY MEETING

WEDNESDAY 4th SEPTEMBER

'No Nukes at Lakenheath, then or now'

Sharing campaigning experiences and discussing how to stop new US nuclear weapons coming to the UK.

The Speaker is Ginnie Herbert, longstanding peace person from Wallingford (and recently arrested at Lakenheath!)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 2nd OCTOBER

Both 7.30pm
at the Friends Meeting House
Lechlade Road, Faringdon

FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT 2024

will run from the
9th of September – 22nd of September

It's 30 years since Fairtrade products first hit the shelves and this year for Fairtrade Fortnight, we're spotlighting how YOU can BE the Change, by choosing Fairtrade every time.

Come into the Mustard Seed to see the wide variety of fairtrade products available and look out for Fairtrade Fortnight special offers.

LOST PROPERTY

Left behind after the Peace Party - a grey plastic mac, and a very nice bowl. Please claim!

NEW FACEBOOK PAGE

West Oxfordshire Voices for Peace and Justice for All. Please take a look!

ANNUAL RALLY AT USAF CROUGHTON

(on the Oxon border with Northants, just off the A43 south of Brackley)

**SATURDAY 12th OCTOBER
from 12 noon**

Speakers from 1pm, to include Peter Burt from Spacewatch/Drone Wars UK, and Jeremy Corbyn (invited)

Bring banners and placards. Accessible toilet
More information/car sharing
Jennie: castle@myphone.coop
Helen: helen.holly007@gmail.com

You will all know that the newsletter was revived during Lockdown, to help us all keep in touch. Now that everything is as normal as its ever going to be, this will be the last issue - unless of course anyone would like to takeover.

“Genocide can only happen when we ignore the warning signs - and are unwilling to take action.”

Jan Eliasson, former Deputy Secretary
General of the United Nations

“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all the darkness”. *Desmond Tutu*

PALESTINE SOLIDARITY NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

At the beginning of August, 100,000 marched in London on the 17th national march we have organised since Israel unleashed its genocide in Gaza. We marched to call for an end to all UK complicity with the genocide that has killed over 40,000 Palestinians and left millions facing catastrophic hunger.

That march cost us over £40,000 to organise. We need to raise more funds to meet this cost and escalate our campaign to end Israel's genocide in Gaza and system of apartheid across Palestine.

We marched also in solidarity with Palestinian prisoners.

Since October Israel has rounded up detained stopped and tortured thousands of Palestinians, over 10,000 held in the West Bank alone. Last week the UN produced a report which documented the systemic torture and abuse including rape of these detainees. We also saw a member of the Israeli Knesset claiming that Israeli forces were entitled to use rape against Palestinian detainees and that no action should be taken against those who do. This is the true face of Israel's genocidal regime.

Meanwhile, the Israeli government made clear its opposition to peace and its intention to expand its genocidal campaign by bombing both Lebanon and Iran.

Israel is proving that it is a rogue state, destabilising the region, undermining prospects of a ceasefire deal, and lashing out at any attempt at accountability for the war crimes that it continues to commit against Palestinians.

With Israel escalating like this, we too must escalate our response.

Shockingly, the response of our government to Israel's increasingly inflammatory actions across the region and daily war crimes within Gaza has not been to immediately ban all arms sales to Israel.

Instead, Foreign Secretary David Lammy has delayed a ban by insisting that each export license for each specific weapon must be reviewed individually for the risk that they may be used in war crimes.

But the pressure on the Government is growing from the movement that we have held build across the UK, as is the pressure on public bodies to take divestment action. In the past few weeks we have seen Kings' College become the first London university to announce that it will divest from companies supplying weapons to Israel, whilst Waltham Forest Local Pension scheme announced that it too will divest funds from complicit companies. **Both these victories came after sustained campaigning including by local PSC branches.**

We do not need lengthy reviews to confirm the war crimes that we have all seen with our own eyes on our TV screens and social media. We do not need to know specifically what each weapon or component is being used for – we know that every arm being sold to Israel is being sold to a state committing genocide against an illegally occupied people.

Israel is finally now facing the prospect of being held to account for its genocide in Gaza and its decades long occupation of Palestine. It is becoming increasingly isolated on the world stage, facing action in the world's highest courts. And the UK government and public bodies are feeling the pressure that we together have built for an end to complicity in Israel's genocide and apartheid.

Now is the time for us to go further. To escalate our campaigns and to expand our support into every corner of society.

But we can only make that happen with your support. Please go to the PSC website to donate

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CHARLES WICKHAM

"We've just heard the sad news that Charles Wickham died of a heart attack last Wednesday, far too young, suddenly and unexpectedly. Many of you will know Charles; married to Elli; stepson of Denny, brother of Gemma, and always a staunch supporter of the Peace Group. May he rest in peace.

Sjoerd
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A STATEMENT FROM ASYLUM WELCOME

Asylum Welcome are horrified by the terrible events of last week and the weekend. We extend our unwavering solidarity to refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, Muslims and communities of colour during this difficult time.

As some of you might know, we have received news of a specific far-right threat to protest outside our building on Wednesday night. We are in touch with the police and are taking precautions. While there may be some disruption this week, we will continue to run services from our office and in the community as far as we safely can.

Asylum Welcome encourages people to stay safe and to report any far-right activity to the authorities. To be clear, we are not involved in or encouraging any counter-protest around our office on Wednesday, as we do not want people to put themselves at risk to defend empty buildings.

We are grateful for and moved by your expressions of solidarity, and we will continue work, while taking precautions to protect our clients, volunteers and staff.

We are proud of our diverse and strong Oxfordshire community. You can help us best by showing your solidarity with refugees in daily life and by challenging misinformation online and in person. Many of the rumours that have been spread are simply false. The men, women and children living in hotels are not illegal; they have the legal right to seek asylum. They are banned from working and excluded from mainstream benefits, relying on just £8.86 a week. They are living in extremely basic accommodation, often sharing a room with a stranger and eating substandard food. They have endured great trauma and seek only to rebuild their lives in peace. Many are volunteering in our communities, in our sports clubs, our choirs and our places of worship. They are our friends and our neighbours.

We must stand united against racist hate.

Aug 5th 2024

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COUNTERING FASCISM

An article in The Friend (this is the Quaker magazine) by former MEP Molly Scott Cato described the recent riots in towns and cities as fascist in nature and asked what could be done by people with no government or legal power to oppose this trend.

She outlined ways of recognising fascism:

Hate groups appearing and active;
More military;
False information and propaganda;
Contempt for intellectuals ('experts');
Enforced social conformity;
Threats to human rights;
Power of labour suppressed;
Denigrating women.

In response:

Join an inclusive community group;
Join a trade union;
Cherish diversity;
Champion peacemaking;
Refuse to conform;
Stand up for human rights;
Support freedom and equality for women;
Seek informed and tested information.

Molly and friends put all this on two sides of a beermat. They took subversive delight in leaving the beer mats on pub tables. This might seem frivolous, but mockery is a powerful weapon.

(Thanks to Jeanette, a Quaker from Charlbury, who kindly precis-ed a fairly long article from 'The Friend')

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NOT BEYOND REDEMPTION

It should not be forgotten that people are not beyond redemption. At a recent meeting I went to, the speaker was a Quaker chaplain from Grendon prison. Her fellow speaker was a convicted murderer. As a teenager he had been part of a homophobic gang who beat a gay man to death. He had quickly felt huge remorse for the crime, a desire to try to atone and become a better person. His account of his journey to becoming a therapist at Grendon and a Quaker was self-deprecating and humorous. He was a charming man who bitterly regretted his past and had suffered himself on the way to reaching his goals. The rioters imprisoned for their behaviour should be offered the means to change.

(Thanks also to Jeanette for this)

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