

NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE NETWORK NEWSLETTER

Published on behalf of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

NVRN, c/o David Polden (editor), Flat 1B, 347 Archway Road, London N6 5AA
tel. 07539-321 118; e-mail: davidtrpolden1@gmail.com

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THE ROAD TO FULL-SCALE WAR?

A summary of major events in the Middle East theatre since the last NVRN newsletter.

July 31: Israeli strike on Beirut kills Fuad Shukur, a senior commander of Hezbollah. A few hours later Ismail Haniyeh, the political leader of Hamas is assassinated in Tehran by a short range missile fired from outside his hotel. There is no doubt that this was organised by Israel, though Israel did not claim it. Iran says it will respond to the killings but delays response, hoping for a possible Gaza ceasefire.



Israeli F15I fighter used to attack Lebanon 2024

August 18; ceasefire talks between Israel and Hamas break down after Israel adds further conditions. These include Israel maintaining a permanent military presence along the Gaza-Egypt border and in the Netzarim corridor, the new Israel-controlled barrier bisecting the Gaza strip. Hamas rejects these conditions, as Israel must have known it would, so there is no ceasefire agreement. The same day there is the first suicide attack in Israel in eight years while between 10,000 and 15,000 demonstrators march to the Democratic national convention in Chicago calling for the US to stop arming Israel.

August 19: UK lawyers in the UK request a court order that the UK government has acted irrationally in refusing to ban the sale of arms to Israel, arguing that there was a clear risk

that the weapons would be used to commit breaches of international humanitarian law, the statutory test set by the UK government to decide whether to grant arms export licences.

August 23: Ronen Bar, head of Israel's security agency Shin Bet warns the country's leaders that Jewish terrorism in the West Bank has become a serious threat to national security. A baby in Gaza is diagnosed with polio being partly paralysed from it. This is the first case of polio there for 25 years. Israel responds by allowing polio vaccines into the strip while continuing the war, making distribution difficult.

August 27: UN says that its ability to function as a humanitarian agency in Gaza is being crippled by a flurry of Israeli evacuation orders forcing Palestinians into ever smaller and more remote areas.

August 30: it is reported that according to UN figures, there have been 1,270 settler attacks against Palestinians in the West Bank since October 7, 120 of which have "led to Palestinian fatalities and injuries".

September 1: after the bodies of six Israeli hostages were discovered in an underground tunnel in Gaza, an estimated 100,000 Israeli protesters in Tel Aviv took to the streets to demand that the government reached a ceasefire deal to bring the remaining hostages home. There were similar demonstrations outside Netanyahu's office in Jerusalem and elsewhere and a general strike was called in support of the demand.

September 2: the UK suspends 30 arms export licences for arms to Israel due to a "clear risk" the arms might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of humanitarian law. However 320 other arms export licences for arms to Israel remain in

unaffected including UK components for the F35 aircraft being used to bomb Gaza. It was revealed the following day by a former Foreign Office official that David Cameron, when Foreign Secretary, had ignored advice from Foreign Office officials dating back to last February that there was already clear evidence of breaches of international humanitarian law in Gaza.

(Italy, Spain and Canada had already banned arms sales to Israel while Holland and Belgium had instituted partial bans.)

September 10: At least four Israeli missiles hit an area in an Israeli-declared “safe zone” in Al-Mawasi, causing dozens of occupied tents to catch fire and leaving deep craters. It was reported that at least 19 people had been killed and injured in the attack. Israel claimed that the objects of the attack were two Hamas officers involved in the October 7 attack on Israel.

September 12: Israel bombed a UN Relief Agency for Palestinians (UNWRA) school in Gaza sheltering about 12,000 displaced people killing at least 18. The UN Secretary-General said the attack broke international laws that protect civilians in war. The same day, Sam Rose, UNWRA’s deputy director reports that UNWRA estimated over a million Gazans will go without food in September since food shipments were being held up by Israel at the border with Egypt. The Gaza Ministry of Health publishes the names, ages and gender of 34,344 of over 41,000 Palestinians killed in Gaza in Israeli attacks since October 7 2023. Another 7,613 bodies recovered were yet to be identified. The figures exclude many thousands thought to be buried under the rubble of the very many collapsed buildings.

September 17-18: On successive days pagers and walkie-talkies issued to Hezbollah members exploded when the owners answered calls, killing at least 37 people and injuring over 3,200, many with injuries to eyes and hands. There was no doubt Israel was responsible for booby-trapping the devices. Such an action is against international law as the perpetrators cannot know that civilians will not use the devices.

September 18 and after: following these assassinations Hamas and Israel fired heavy waves of missiles at each other, with most Hamas missiles being shot down but Israeli

ones largely reaching their targets. The strike kills at least 12 and wounds 66 in Lebanon. Lebanese sources reported that Ibrahim Aqil, a member of Hezbollah’s top military council, was killed in the attack.

September 23: reported that 350 Lebanese are killed and over 1,200 injured that day by Israeli airstrikes.

September 24: announced that the UK is moving 700 troops to Cyprus to help with the evacuation of UK citizens from Lebanon. Meanwhile tens of thousands of Lebanese fleeing from south Lebanon travel towards Beirut and others, including refugees who had previously fled Syria, cross into Syria.

September 28: UK calls for an immediate ceasefire in the Hezbollah-Israeli conflict as do many other countries. Netanyahu says Israel will attack Hezbollah “with full force” until its goals are achieved.

September 30: Israel launches a “limited” ground invasion of Lebanon, while ordering inhabitants of some 25 villages in south Lebanon to move north, beyond the Litani river. It gives as its aim to eliminate Hezbollah from south Lebanon in order that 60,000 Israelis evacuated from their homes near the border can return without the threat of Hezbollah rockets being fired at the from over the border. This time Netanyahu also adds the grandiloquent and ominous aim of “changing the balance of power in the region for years.” Israel launches waves of airstrikes against Yemen, attacking fuel facilities, power plants and ports. The next day Iran fires nearly 200 missiles at Israel, aimed at military targets. These are higher speed missiles than used in its earlier attack and this time many reach their targets without being shot down, though limited damage is reportedly caused, Israel vows to retaliate, so now Israel is fighting on five fronts: in Gaza, Lebanon, Iran, Yemen and in the West Bank

October 1: The US announces support for Israel’s ground attack in Lebanon, though it had previously joined international calls for a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah. Seven passengers are killed and 10 wounded in Jaffa on the Tel Aviv light railway in a gun and knife attack.

October 2: reported that over a 1,000 people have already died in the previous fortnight of Israeli attacks on Lebanon, with a million of its soldiers have been killed in clashes with



And now Lebanon, October 3 2024

Hezbollah, with others rendered homeless. The same day Israel confirms eight, which itself claims to have destroyed three Israeli tanks. The Biden administration does not criticise Israel's intention to launch a so-called "decisive" attack against Iran in retaliation for the September 30 attack by Iran, but Biden says the US wouldn't support attacks on Iranian nuclear sites or (a day later) on oil facilities, without saying what, if anything, the US would do if they did.

October 4: Ex-Israeli PM Ehud Barak says that Israel could possibly mount a "symbolic" attack on a nuclear site. In London PSC mounts its 20th central London march and rally calling for a ceasefire now in Gaza and Lebanon. It is tens of thousands strong. A similar march is held in Edinburgh.

October 5: President Macron of France says France will not be sending any more arms to Israel and called for an international embargo on arms deliveries to Israel for use against Gaza.

October 9: Israel warns that the revenge attack on Iran will be "lethal, precise and surprising".

October 10: deadliest strike on Beirut since fighting began hits apartment complex killing 22 and wounding was later proved to be caused by a very large US bomb from examination of shrapnel found at the site. The same day a UN report accuses Israel of committing a war crime in destroying Gaza's health system and the UN peace-keeping mission in Lebanon accuses Israeli forces of deliberately firing at its positions wounding two of its member, in violation of international law.

Where is this all heading?:



It is suggested by some Israelis that Netanyahu wants Israel to continue war in the Middle East indefinitely so that he can remain prime minister and not have to face either an election or a trial on charges outstanding against him. He is generally an unpopular figure in Israel and would almost certainly lose an election. The charges against him are of fraud, bribery and breach of trust for which he could be sentenced to 10 years.

If this is his motivation it is no surprise that he has had no interest in agreeing a ceasefire with Hamas. Whenever Hamas seems to be on the brink of agreeing a ceasefire proposal he issues new conditions that are impossible for Hamas to accept. How many are to die to keep him in power?

It is also of a piece with this that he gives as his war aims, things that are impossible to achieve. In Gaza his announced aims are the elimination of Hamas and freeing the hostages. But the war itself serves to

strengthen support for Hamas in Gaza. Israel could only eliminate Hamas from Gaza by killing or exiling most of its citizens, which indeed would seemingly suit some among his right wing cabinet. And if you are interested

in the safe return of the hostages the last thing you should do is attack with heavy weapons the territory in which they are being held. Indeed it is reported that half the remaining hostages are now dead, presumably largely as the result of Israeli bombing.

The main ways Netanyahu could become more popular in Israel is by waging a successful war and getting the hostages freed. In Gaza he has failed to achieve either of these things in a year. No wonder he has chosen to start a new war or perhaps two. Hence the major attacks on and invasion of Lebanon, which indeed is reported to have increased his popularity – wars are usually popular with the populace as long as they can be seen as successful in their aims and don't last too long or produce too many casualties among your troops.

As was said above, Netanyahu's aim this time is to remove Hezbollah from a large area of south Lebanon so Israelis evacuated from the border area can return to their homes with no risk of attacks by Hezbollah.. Again, is this achievable? Presumably Israel has the military might to clear Hezbollah from the south of Lebanon, but then the IDF

will need to continue to occupy this area to prevent Hezbollah reoccupying it, as it did after a previous war in Lebanon before being forced to leave. And Hezbollah would continue to operate further north in Lebanon and will be in a position to fire missiles at the troops occupying the border area and the villages in northern Israel. Perhaps the IDF will try to use its Gaza tactic of causing as much slaughter and destruction as possible with the hope that it will destroy Hezbollah as a military force in so doing, perhaps occupying the whole of Lebanon, as it has Gaza to try to achieve this. In this case however Hezbollah could simply move its forces into Syria, so widening the war, though Israel has destroyed a major crossing-point into Syria.

Israel also seems set on a war, at least of missiles, with Iran. It's not clear what good this will do except cause more death and destruction on both sides. And embarking on a ground invasion of Iran would seem very risky. I think it would depend on US support and I wouldn't imagine that the US would want to risk a war with Iran, however much it continues its "unconditional" support for Israel.

PA ACTIVISTS DETAINED UNDER TERRORISM ACT

On August 10 *Palestine Action* (PA) reported that supporters were being detained under the *Terrorism Act*, which allows the police to detain people for up to 7 days, with possible extension to 14 days, **without charge**. This comes after six were arrested on Tuesday 6th August for entering Elbit Systems' new Filton, Bristol factory, to prevent its manufacture of weapons for use in Gaza. As well as detaining them under these powers, police have launched a smear campaign against those detained, alleging violence against police and security guards. PA contends that these statements are designed to prejudice opinion and legal proceedings against activists.

PA announced that this meant 16 of its activists by then were in prison, five serving prison sentences and 11 remanded in custody.

APCO Worldwide are political lobbyists for Israel's biggest weapons company, *Elbit Systems*. On September 2, PA activists sprayed red paint over its premises at 40 on the Strand, London using repurposed fire extinguishers before the three attached themselves to each other using a lock on device within a suitcase. The front door was closed using a D-lock and a banner was unfurled which reads 'Stop lobbying for Genocide. APCO Drop Elbit'. The three were arrested and charged with criminal damage.

Over the night of 11-12 September PA targeted over 10 Barclays Bank sites, including branches,



PA activists sitting outside ARCO Worldwide after painting premises red

call centres and offices in London, Manchester, Tunbridge Wells, Oxford and Edinburgh and elsewhere, in their campaign to get Barclays to cease their investments in Elbit Systems. Premises had red paint sprayed over them and their windows smashed.

On September 30, the Guardian published documents revealed by a freedom of information request that suggest political interference in the prosecution of Palestine Action activists. The documents detail two separate meetings between government ministers and Elbit Systems UK. Both meetings focussed on how the UK's judicial system deals with PA activists who carry out direct action against Elbit. The aim of both meetings was to reassure Elbit Systems that the government cares about the harm Palestine Action are causing to Elbit and the wider private sector. The first was a meeting in March 2022 between Elbit Systems UK's CEO and Home Secretary Priti Patel. At this it was acknowledged that the police "are operationally independent of the government", but notes on the meeting say that officials have been in contact with the police about PA and that "the Government is working, where appropriate, to ensure that those who engage in criminal activity progress through the Criminal Justice System." So the police are being leaned on by the Government.

THE LAW CONTINUES TO JAIL JSO ACTIVISTS.

On August 1st, five *Just Stop Oil* (JSO) supporters were sentenced at Basildon Crown Court to long periods in prison for the new statutory crime of "public nuisance", a crime introduced under the *Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022*. The five were among 23 people who occupied gantries over the M25 motorway for four days in November 2022, causing traffic on the M25 to be diverted. The action was in support of the JSO's demand that the UK government immediately halts all licensing and consents for new fossil fuel exploration and extraction. The five all pleaded guilty to the charge and were sentenced to between 20 months and 2 years each. A sixth person charged with the same offence, who pleaded guilty, was sentenced to a 21 month sentence suspended for 24 months, and ordered to do 200 hours of unpaid work and pay £750 costs. Five others who had been charged with conspiracy to commit the same action were sentenced in July to between four and five years. This brought the number of JSO activists in prison to 21.

Two days later hundreds gathered by the Gandhi statue in Parliament Square for a public meeting in solidarity with the 21. JSO supporters were joined by ones from Extinction Rebellion, Defend Our Juries and Fossil-Free London.

On August 6, five JSO supporters appeared before Manchester Magistrates charged conspiracy to intentionally or recklessly cause a public nuisance, in relation to airport actions that had taken place in recent weeks. All were remanded to prison until at least

their next appearance in court on September 10. The following day JSO called for a halt in demonstrations in view of the anti-migrant rioting taking place

On September 6, four more JSO activists on trial at Basildon Crown Court for conspiracy to cause a public nuisance were sentenced to between 15 months and three years. A fifth person on the same charge was given a suspended sentence. The group had taken action in August 2022 by occupying tunnels dug under the road leading to the Navigator Oil Terminal in Thurrock, simultaneously with three other tunnelling actions in Essex and Warwickshire, and occupations of oil trucks and terminals overground. JSO reported that one of the group involved in the Thurrock action, Xavier Trimmer-Gonzalez, had taken his life in 2023 whilst under strict curfew and electronic monitoring after spending time in prison for taking part in JSO and Insulate Britain actions.

On September 13, JSO reported that 25 of its supporters were in prison.

On September 27 two JSO supporters who threw tomato soup over Van Gogh's Sunflowers at the National Gallery in October 2022 were sentenced at Southwark Crown Court to 20 months and two years respectively. They are also subject to 3-year Criminal Behaviour Orders. They had been found guilty in July of causing criminal damage costing £10,000 to the frame of the painting. The painting is behind glass and

was not itself damaged. The judge at the trial had dismissed all legal defences put by the defence, including proportionality and freedom of expression under the Human Rights Act without hearing arguments from the defence on these issues. was not damaged. At the trial the judge dismissed all the defendants' defences, including proportionality and freedom of expression under the Human Rights Act without hearing arguments from either the prosecution or defence on these issues.



Sitting and awaiting arrest after soup throwing

Two hours after the verdict was given in the above case at around 2.30pm, three JSO supporters threw Heinz vegetable soup over *two* Van Gogh Sunflowers paintings at the gallery. They spoke to visitors, saying “*Future generations will regard these [JSO]prisoners of conscience to be on the right side of history.*” They then sat in front of the painting before arrest on suspicion of criminal damage.

October 2, 2024: In complete contrast to the above treatment by a judge at Brentwood Crown Court of JSO activists who had thrown soup at Van Gogh’s Sunflowers, a judge at Manchester Magistrates’ Court acquits two JSO supporters who glued themselves to the frame of a Turner painting at Manchester Art Gallery, also in July 2022 and also chalked “No New Oil” and the JSO logo on the floor of criminal damage. The the damage caused was assessed at “less than £5,000” meaning the case did not have to be sent to the Crown Court. The District Judge found after allowing the defence to argue their case that the action was proportionate in view of the climate crisis.

EXTINCTION REBELLION (ER)

On July 22, a jury at Leeds Crown Court found ER supporter and grandmother Karen Wilden guilty of obstructing a train carrying 2,500 tonnes of wood pellets to Drax power station in Yorkshire by stopping it by climbing onto the roof. Her aim was to draw attention to a lying campaign to portray Drax as a source of renewable energy. She did so by a film of her action being shared online around the world.

The judge had told the jury that they could not acquit her on grounds of conscience. But that a jury has an absolute right to acquit a defendant on grounds of conscience was established in a binding precedent set by a judgement in a case in 1670. A judge can “direct” a jury to convict a defendant but should make it clear that they don’t have to follow his/her direction. Surely the judge’s

misdirection of the jury in this case is strong grounds for an appeal?

Karen was given a suspended sentence with a fine of £3,000. Less than two months later, on September 16, Drax power station shut down, becoming the last coal-fired UK power station to close.

XR organised a 3-day protest camp in Windsor Great Park from August 30 to September 1. The aim was publicise XR’s call for a citizens’ assembly to solve the problem of how to stop climate change. Actions organised over the weekend included a procession to the front of Windsor Castle delivering a pink post box filled with letters to the King from children and adults about climate change and a three-hour occupation of land outside the castle addressed by speakers and entertained by performers.

CASHING IN!

It was reported on August 17, that the UK’s biggest law firm, *DLA Piper* was seeking over £1m from climate activists. These were the total costs the firm charged for 1) representing *National Highways Ltd.* and *HS2 Ltd.* (both public bodies) in obtaining court injunctions banning more than each of 200 activists from protesting on and around motorways and HS2 rail construction sites; 2)

costs involved in bringing to trial 12 protesters who breached the injunctions. This amounted to nearly quarter of the total costs.

PLUS ÇA CHANGE, PLUS C'EST LA MÊME CHOSE!

1) HOME OFFICE RE-OPENS CASE AGAINST COURT RULING

In 2023, Home Secretary Suella Braverman laid a statutory instrument (SI) before Parliament that lowered the threshold at which police can impose conditions on public protests, defining it as “more than minor” disruption to community life, rather than, as before, “significant and “prolonged” such disruption.

In May 2024, following a judicial review brought by *Liberty*, the High Court ruled Braverman acted unlawfully when she made regulations restricting the right to public protest and ordered the changes to be quashed. The court found that by using an SI

to make the alteration, the Home Secretary had acted beyond her authority because when it passed the Public Order Act 1986, Parliament “would not have contemplated that it [an SI] could be used to change the meaning of ‘serious’ so as to lower the protection accorded to the fundamental common law rights of public procession and assembly”. The Home Office that same month planned an appeal against this decision. In July, the Home, Office now under Labour Home Secretary Yvette Cooper, paused these plans but then, on 29th August, decided to resume the appeal.

2) OFFSHORING OF ASYLUM SEEKERS TO CONTINUE?



Asylum-seekers taken aboard Border Force boat

The new Labour Government cancelled the very expensive plan to deport asylum seekers arriving in the UK on small boats across the Channel for Rwanda to deal with very soon after entering office in July 2024. However, they followed this by announcing like the Tories before them they too would “stop the boats” bringing asylum-seekers “illegally” across the Channel, without of course providing legal ways of asylum-seekers from most countries to apply for asylum in the UK. Keir Starmer was indeed reported as even looking at plans to process asylum-seekers outside the UK (presumably somewhere other than Rwanda!) after discussing illegal migration with fellow Europeans leaders at Blenheim Palace, including a meeting with the PM of Albania which has an arrangement to process asylum seekers landing in Italy.

After an official visit on September 16 to meet Giorgia Meloni Italian PM and leader the far-right *Brothers of Italy* party, Starmer said that he will study Italy's plans for an asylum processing deal with Albania. He also said he was interested in Italy's model of paying north African countries to do more to stop boat crossings, (as does the EU, while the UK already pays France to try to stop asylum-seekers crossing the Channel.) An investigation by the *Guardian* alleged Tunisian national guard officers funded by this money are colluding with smugglers to arrange migrant boat trips, as well as routinely robbing, beating and abandoning women and children in the desert without food or water.

Italy's proposed deal with Albania is less draconian than the UK deal with Rwanda, in that, unlike the Rwanda plan, asylum-seekers in Italy sent to Albania will be allowed to return to Italy if granted asylum. But Albania has already denied that it would process asylum-seekers from the UK. So what poor country desperate for the money will the UK turn to next to try to bribe to take UK asylum-seekers off our hands?

But the idea that a Labour PM should wish to take lessons on how to deal with asylum-seekers from an Italian neo-fascist PM almost beggars belief!

COMING EVENTS

(London except where stated.)

To Jan. 19, 2025: "Peter Kennard: Archives of Dissent." Exhibition of his works at the Whitechapel Art Gallery (by Aldgate East tube.) Free; open from 11am Tuesday to Sunday.

October

16-27: "Tea with Stalin." Play at the Gatehouse theatre in Highgate.

26, assemble near Piccadilly Circus at 11.30am for a "Stop Tommy Robinson; Unite against Racism, Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism" event. Organised by Stand Up to Racism, www.standuptoracism.org.uk

November

2, Lakenheath: National CND demonstration against US nuclear weapons returning to the US base at Lakenheath in Cambridgeshire. London CND is running a coach to the demo. See www.londoncnd.org or phone 020-7607 2302.

2, noon-4.30pm. Assemble noon, Central London for next National march and rally for Palestine. Info: www.palestinecampaign.org

2, "Umbrella March." Assemble in Parliament Square at 1.30pm. Organised by climate activist groups XR London, Just Stop Oil, Fuel Poverty Action, XR for Palestine, Disabled People Against Cuts and Youth Demand. Aim to demonstrate our collective power. Info:

enquiries@extinctionrebellion.uk

10, noon-1pm National annual Pacifist Remembrance Sunday Ceremony by the Conscience Objectors Stone in Tavistock Square WC1. Organised by Peace Pledge Union, mail@ppu.org.uk; 020-7424 9444

10, 2pm: Movement for the Abolition of War AGM at Mander Hall, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, WC1H 9BD. Organised by: Movement for the Abolition of War. Contact:

info@abolishwar.org.uk

10, Wokingham, noon-1pm: Remembrance Ceremony in Howard Palmer Gardens, off Denton Road, Wokingham RG40 2BX.

10, Ipswich, 12.15pm: Remembrance Ceremony including laying white poppy wreath at the War Memorial in Christchurch Park. Organised by Ipswich Quakers.

14, 7.30pm: Musicians for Peace and Disarmament orchestral Concert of works by Mendelssohn and Britten. At St. James's,

Piccadilly. £25/£20 (Concessions) Info: <https://mpdconcets.org>

15, 1-2pm ONLINE: CND Webinar: "US-UK Mutual Defence Agreement. Briefing by CND and Nuclear Information Service on the import of the agreement. Info: CND on 020 7700 2393

20, Telford: "Stop Telford Arms Fair." at Telford International Centre, International Way, Telford, Shropshire TF3 4JH. Fair runs from 18th-20th. focuses on military equipment for front-line infantry soldiers. Fair includes exhibitors for arms companies complicit in Israeli genocide in Gaza, including Israeli company Elbit Systems and L3 Harris and Ultra Electronics who supply equipment for Israeli F35 bombers used in Gaza. Action organised by Stop SDSC-UK, Quakers, XR and CAAT. Info:

tinyurl.com/STOPSDSC

23, Hastings, 7.30pm: Poetry Fundraiser for Gaza at White Rock Hotel. Organised by Hastings PSC. Info:

info@hastingspalestinecampaign.org

Last Saturday of month, Lakenheath, noon-2pm: *Lakenheath Alliance for Peace* vigil at the main gate to highlight that we don't want US nuclear weapons returning to Britain. Contact:

vigils@lakenheathallianceforpeace.org.uk

1st Monday of every other month, Edinburgh, from 7pm: Edinburgh CAAT meeting to organise around the arms trade in Scotland, Held by ZOOM or at Words and Actions for Peace (58 Ratcliffe Terrace, Edinburgh, EH9 1ST. Info:

scotland@caat.org.uk

3rd Tuesday of the month, ZOOM, 6.30pm: London Campaign Against the Arms Trade meeting. To join group and for details of joining meeting, e-mail:

londoncaat@riseup.net

Every Wednesday, 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