

September 2023

# KINGSTON PEACE NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF KINGSTON PEACE COUNCIL /  
CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

<http://kpc.gn.apc.org> [www.facebook.com/kingstonpeace](http://www.facebook.com/kingstonpeace)



## DSEI at the ExCeL Centre

DSEI (Defence & Security Equipment International), one of the world's biggest arms fairs, is coming to the ExCeL Centre in East London this September. Arms companies will woo buyers from around the world, including authoritarian regimes and human rights abusers. The UK government promotes and facilitates this murky trade at taxpayers' expense through UK Defence & Security Exports, a section of the Department for Business & Trade.

A network of peace and human rights organisations will be raising awareness of the event and organising protests during the setting up, 4-11 September, and during the week of the fair itself, 12-15 September.

### KPC Action

On Wednesday 13 September we'll be joining the Movement for the Abolition of War (MAW) in making the link between the weapons on sale at the ExCeL Centre, and the Government Dept for Business and Trade in Whitehall.

Come and help us leaflet and talk to members of the public and those working in government buildings nearby, about this trade in death.

**Further details of this action, as well as the programme of all the other events so far organised to resist DSEI, are on page 2.**

**KPC/CND monthly meetings** are held online on the second Tuesday of each month. Please contact [gill@gillhurle.plus.com](mailto:gill@gillhurle.plus.com) for joining instructions. We are sorry that this excludes members without internet access.

## Remembering Hiroshima in Kingston

On 6 August we held a midday vigil in the town centre and our usual commemoration in Canbury Gardens - for a detailed report see page 4.



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## DSEI at the ExCeL Centre

*continued from page 1*

**The KPC/MAW action will be on Wednesday 13 September, 8am – 6pm with a special focus on 8 – 10am, 12 – 2pm and from 4pm onwards.**

**Come for all or part of the day - any time you can spare will be much appreciated.**

It would be helpful if you could let us know in advance when you plan to be there so we can prepare a rota to ensure all-day coverage. Please contact [mary.holmes@phonecoop.coop](mailto:mary.holmes@phonecoop.coop)

For the early shift meet 7.45 - 8am at Trafalgar Theatre, 14 Whitehall, SW1A 2DY.

On arrival contact Hilary: 07759 540441 or Mary: 07741 459100 to find out where we are if you can't see us and to get leaflets.

Rest, relaxation, food and toilets are available in the crypt of nearby St Martin in the Fields.

**We plan a non-confrontational day with no expectation of arrest. The aim is to engage with as many people as possible and encourage people to get involved.**

### Other events so far organised

(Check <https://stopthearmsfair.org.uk/events/> for the latest information on this programme - it is being continuously updated.)

#### Tues 5<sup>th</sup>

Quaker Pilgrimage sets off from Oxford – arriving London on 11<sup>th</sup> Sept.

6-7pm – Palestine Solidarity Campaign – Vigil style event with speeches, readings from literature etc. Cundy Park, Victoria Dock Road, Custom House, Newham, London E16 3DL.

#### Wed 6<sup>th</sup>

Teach in Day at east entrance – films being screened.

11 am Family friendly walk from Stratford Station, E15 1AZ, to ExCel, handing out fliers to shops, cafes and passers-by, to draw attention to DSEI. Organised by Mad Hatters, WILPF (Women's International League for Peace & Freedom) and led by members of former Veterans for Peace UK, who will carry wreaths in memory of all victims of the arms trade. On arrival at ExCel Centre a ceremony will be held during which former VFP members will cast the wreaths into the dock remembering particularly the victims of recent wars.

#### Thurs 7<sup>th</sup> No Faith In War Day

Multi-faith day of Worship and Witness coordinated by Quaker Roots at East entrance (on the roundabout).

APF walking from Ascension Church Centre (assemble 10.30am) and Pax Christi from RC church.

9-10am Meeting for Worship

1-2pm Meeting for Worship

5pm Epilogue

#### Fri 8<sup>th</sup> Climate Day

12noon to 4pm - MAW will leaflet outside the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero, 1 Victoria Street, SW1H 0ET (near Westminster Abbey) raising awareness of the connection between military activity and climate change, and asking how we can hope to reach net zero without taking account of this.

#### Sat 9<sup>th</sup> Festival of Resistance Family day

10am-12.30 Tavistock Square, WC1H 9EZ  
Wheels not Weapons! Critical Mass bike ride to ExCeL Centre. Bring flags, noise and defiance.

#### Sun 10<sup>th</sup>

Abolition Now! DSEI, Policing and Prisons - learn about the direct relationship of policing and prisons with the arms fair.

#### Mon 11<sup>th</sup>

Peace walkers from Oxford arrive.

Quaker walk of witness around the fair.

Evening – Vigil at Excel Centre. Meet 6.30pm at Royal Victoria DLR station for silent candlelit vigil 7-8pm in Royal Victoria Square.

#### Tues 12<sup>th</sup> Migrant Justice Day

Migrant Justice Day takes place on the first day of the Arms Fair. It is a day of resistance, talks, workshops and activities: against borders and in celebration of a future where migrants and refugees are welcomed, not arms dealers. Events will be focused at 3 points in the day – in the morning, as delegates arrive (8.30-10.30am), at lunchtime (12-2pm) & in the evening (5-7pm).

There will be a physical presence at Western gateway between these times.

11 am Mad Hatters walk in town crier costumes from Stratford station to Excel Centre, leafletting shops and passers-by. Walk to go directly to dock where wreaths will be placed in the water.

#### Wed 13<sup>th</sup>

KPC/MAW action as described above.

## **Weaponising Anti-Semitism: How the Israel Lobby Brought Down Jeremy**

**Corbyn by Asa Winstanley, OR Books, £14.99**

*Book review from the Morning Star*

IN this meticulously researched book, journalist Asa Winstanley probes a taboo topic avoided by the mainstream press and even by some stalwart left-wing activists.

*Weaponising Anti-Semitism* describes how numerous Labour Party activists and former leader Jeremy Corbyn were falsely accused of being anti-semites or tolerating anti-semitism. Winstanley dismantles these allegations piece by piece and dispels the myth that anti-semitism was in any way endemic within Labour under Corbyn's leadership. The author cuts through aspersions and accusations with facts.

Despite Corbyn being a committed anti-racist, supporter of justice for all peoples including Palestinians, and a left-wing Labour MP, this did not previously perturb the establishment who never believed he might one day hold the reins of power in Labour.

Corbyn's unexpected election as party leader in 2015 was followed by a massive growth in Labour's membership, swelling numbers to over 500,000, making Labour the largest political party in Western Europe at the time. Furthermore, many longstanding members felt reinvigorated by a leader to whom they could relate.

Despite being hugely popular amongst the rank and file, Corbyn's election risked upsetting two established constants within Labour which any party leader was required to maintain, namely to hold a pro-Israel stance and not be too critical of capitalism. Corbyn's election set in motion a massive smear campaign designed to tarnish his image. To this end pro-zionist activists within Labour (some of whom had previously been employed by or had links with the Israeli embassy) worked relentlessly to pump out endless disinformation about Corbyn and his allies in order to weaken their party leader's reputation and position within Labour. A particularly underhand tactic was to create a false equivalence whereby any criticism of Israel's treatment of Palestinians or of zionist ideology was conflated with anti-semitism and an attack on Jewish identity. Winstanley lists individuals that found themselves under investigation or even expelled from Labour despite no evidence of anti-semitic behaviour. His description evokes the "red scare" of the McCarthy era.

A key point is that pro-Israeli activists and lobbyists did not operate in a vacuum. They might not have succeeded but for the unconditional support of right-wing Labour MPs who were happy to damage their party's electoral chances by undermining and deposing their leader. Moreover, the mainstream British media played a major role in amplifying the baseless claims that anti-semitism had taken root in Labour under Corbyn's leadership and unquestioningly used unverified reports.

Interestingly, research later showed that the greatest amount of misinformation did not come from right-wing news sources but rather from supposedly liberal media outlets.

When unsubstantiated allegations of anti-semitism emerged, rather than examining the facts and dismissing accusations that did not stand up to scrutiny, Labour's bureaucracy took prompt action against the accused. Such investigations were used in turn to fuel the idea of a (non-existent) anti-semitism crisis within Labour.

Whilst the membership was strongly behind Corbyn, his failure to challenge or stop the unjust suspension of several high-profile party figures proved an error in judgement, suggests Winstanley, as the rank and file then began to question Corbyn himself. Corbyn tried to compromise with his enemies, making him appear weak and only encouraging further attacks. Winstanley identifies this as a second error, suggesting that had Corbyn assertively acted against disloyal MPs and vehemently pushed back against allegations of anti-semitism, his enemies might not have succeeded.

Winstanley demonstrates how quickly and forcefully the state apparatus can be mobilised against a politician, even a popular one, who steps outside the bounds of what the establishment considers acceptable. Winstanley has created a historical document that shows how an emerging mass movement was defeated by a combination of the media, the establishment, self-serving Labour MPs, and lobby groups who worked in concert to subvert democracy.

*Weaponising Anti-Semitism* is required reading



# Hiroshima commemorations

## Midday Vigil in Kingston

As in recent years we stood in the centre of Kingston near the Bentall Centre, holding posters. We found there was considerable interest from passers-by, with children looking at the posters and adults taking leaflets. Maybe this is a good way of drawing attention to important issues we could use on other occasions.

## Evening commemoration in Canbury Gardens



The Mayor, Councillor Diane White, attended our candle-lit event beside the Thames in Canbury Gardens. The weather was beautiful and it was a very moving occasion.



Councillor White was interested to receive from Hilary a copy of the declaration by the Mayor of Hiroshima issued the previous day by the international organisation Mayors for Peace (see article on page 6). The Mayor said that she had not previously heard about the organisation.

A young Japanese family was present and the two daughters had folded a number of origami cranes, remembering Sadako Sasaki\*, the little girl whose



story is among the most poignant of all those to emerge from the Hiroshima bombing.

\* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sadako\\_Sasaki](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sadako_Sasaki)

Following the speeches (see Phil's speech reproduced opposite), white flowers were strewn on the Thames.





# Hiroshima commemorations

continued

## Phillip Cooper's excellent speech



We're here this evening to commemorate the 78<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the destruction of Hiroshima, and three days later, Nagasaki, by the dropping of the world's first atomic bombs.

But as these terrible events move farther from us in time it seems that the prospect of such events recurring moves ever closer. Secretary General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres said last year: "The prospect of nuclear conflict, once unthinkable, is now back within the realm of possibility". He made the comment less than a month after the start of the War in Ukraine.

Meanwhile the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, an organisation that brings together scientific experts, including many Nobel laureats, from around the world, has now set the so-called Doomsday Clock at 90 seconds to midnight – the closest that it has ever been set to what is viewed as an existential threat to global civilization.

Why? One cause is the accelerated pace of climate change. The other the circumstances surrounding, and responses to, the War in Ukraine. That war, precipitated by Russia's invasion, is now 18 months old. On one side is the country that possesses the world's largest nuclear weapons arsenal; Russia is estimated to have 5,889 nuclear weapons; on the other side Ukraine backed by Nato comprising the US with 5,244 such weapons, France with 290, Britain with 225. That totals more than 11,600 nuclear weapons held by nations in conflict with one another.

But in a sense the numbers, the league table of who has what, are meaningless given the destruct-

-ive power of just one nuclear bomb or missile. Today's nuclear weapons can be 1000 times more powerful than the bombs that incinerated and flattened those two Japanese cities whose destruction we are here to bear witness to.

A couple of weeks ago one of the summer's blockbuster cinema films appeared. No, not Barbie – Oppenheimer. The story of the creation of the atomic bomb by scientists led by American physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer.

The film's central character is a worried man who agonises and moralises about the hitherto undreamt-of destructive power he has created. Is this just another special-effects heavy Hollywood film or will it actually make people stop and think about the threat of nuclear war?

The organisation ICAN – the International Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons – winner of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize - is doing its best to ensure the latter is the case. Publishing online what it calls the Oppenheimer Campaign Action Kit ICAN says:

***The release of the Oppenheimer film, and the wave of (media) attention surrounding it, creates an opportunity to spark public attention on the risks of nuclear weapons and invite new audiences to get involved in the movement to abolish them. We can educate about the risks, and share a much-needed message of hope and resistance:***

And the organisation poses the question:

**Oppenheimer shows how nuclear weapons started. But how will they end?**

It's a call to action that, we continue to hope, will re-energise organisations such as this but also people generally, to press for the end of nuclear arsenals, and not the end of civilization.

But, specifically today, we remember the estimated 226,000 people who died as a result of the two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. That's equivalent to every woman, man and child living today in the Borough of Kingston upon Thames plus an additional 58,000 people, which would include everyone living in Teddington, Hampton and Molesey as well.

It is for all of our futures that we continue to bear witness every August 6<sup>th</sup> and continuously to argue for an end to the nuclear weapons insanity that threatens us all.

## Mayor Kazumi Matsui's 2023 Peace Declaration.

Every year on 6 August, the City of Hiroshima holds a Peace Memorial Ceremony to pray for the peaceful repose of the victims, for the abolition of nuclear weapons, and for lasting world peace.

During that ceremony, the mayor of Hiroshima issues a Peace Declaration directed toward the world at large. As long as the need persists,

Hiroshima's mayor will continue to issue these declarations calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth.

Mayor Kazumi Matsui's 2023 Peace Declaration was circulated by Mayors for Peace and it was a copy of this that was given to the Mayor of Kingston at our Hiroshima ceremony. The Declaration can be read at <https://rafu.com/2023/08/hiroshima-mayors-2023-peace-declaration/>

## CAAT News

**Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) was extremely disappointed in the result of the Judicial Review against UK arms export licences to Saudi Arabia. As the organisation explains in the Summer edition of *CAAT News*, the verdict was eventually handed down on 6 June, and it was not the one they were hoping for.**

The judges rejected all four of CAAT's grounds for challenge, ruling that the Government had not acted irrationally in concluding there was no "clear risk" that UK arms might be used to commit serious violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in Yemen. This in spite of the detailed, documented record of widespread civilian death and harm from the Saudi-led bombing campaign.

The court's role, as the judges made clear, is not to decide if the Government's judgements are correct, merely if it was rationally possible to make those judgements based on the law and the facts. This is a high bar, and surpassing it was always going to be a challenge.

Nonetheless, there are many troubling aspects of the judge's ruling. They accepted that the Government could treat incidents that had not been investigated by the Saudi Coalition's Joint Incident Assessment Team (JIAT), as not having enough information to decide if they were even "possible" violations of IHL, even when UN expert panels and/or NGOs had provided detailed on-the-ground evidence.

The Government claimed, and the judges accepted, that pursuing such incidents further with the Saudis could offend them, and expend valuable diplomatic capital. Thus, the Saudis' own failure to investigate, along with their thin skin in the face of criticism, was effectively treated as evidence in favour of arms sales, while

diplomatic relations were placed above human life.

The judges also accepted the Government's invocation of the sacred formula of "national security" to explain why they could not pursue further investigation, citing the appalling Supreme Court ruling over the stripping of Shamima Begum's citizenship, which stated that Government claims of national security concerns can almost never be overruled by the courts.

After consulting with our lawyers, CAAT is not pursuing an appeal. Nevertheless, we will continue our campaign against these outrageous sales. We believe this case demonstrates the inadequacy of current export control laws, allowing the sale of arms that are used to kill civilians in large numbers, and giving the Government excessive leeway to explain such death and destruction away as "isolated incidents".

Meanwhile in Yemen, an uneasy partial truce largely continues, in particular with no Saudi air strikes since April 2022. However, the Saudi partial blockade of Houthi-held ports continues to cause suffering, while all parties to the conflict commit serious human rights abuses, the Houthis in particular engaging in gross repression and human rights abuses in the areas they control.

Negotiations towards a full peace deal between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis continue, but there are fears that any such peace will not be truly inclusive, excluding the voices of women and civil society. Meanwhile there are no prospects of any parties to the conflict facing accountability for the crimes they have committed over the past nearly nine years.

In spite of the setback, CAAT will be actively challenging the arms dealers rolling back into town for the DSEI arms fair in London.

## Demolitions on the West Bank

In our last newsletter we reported that Phil Cooper had written to local MPs on behalf of our Group about the situation on the Palestinian West Bank and the political prisoner Walid Daqqah.

Phil received the following reply from Sarah Olney, MP for Richmond Park, sent on 6 July:

*Dear Phillip and the Kingston Peace Council,*

*Thank you for taking the time to write to me about this important issue.*

*The Liberal Democrats are extremely concerned by the deteriorating human rights situation in Israel and Palestine as detailed in reports published by B'Tselem, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International detailing transgressions by successive Israeli Governments.*

*We believe that given the 55-year old Israeli occupation and that, under international law, occupation is meant to be temporary, the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory is illegal under international law.*

*We are particularly troubled by the formation of the new far-right Israeli government. It is deeply disturbing that the new government wants to promote the illegal settlements, and the conduct of a number of Ministers is deeply condemnable.*

*The Liberal Democrats are committed to the international rule of law. We are hugely concerned by proposals such as settlement expansion and demolitions of Palestinian homes and schools, which are breaches of international law and must be condemned by the international community.*

*We are hugely concerned regarding the proposals to significantly expand illegal settlements via the construction of 780 new settlement units as part of the E1 scheme. The proposals represent an egregious breach of international law, and must be condemned by the international community.*

*The Liberal Democrats call on the UK Government to condemn settler violence in the Palestinian territories and to urge their Israeli counterparts to take action against these particular settlers, who are further damaging prospects of a peaceful solution to the conflict.*

*On the subject of Walid Al Daqqa, it may interest you to know that a question was asked in the House of Commons last week on this subject, with*

*the response from Minister David Rutley being as follows:*

*“Israel must abide by its obligations under International Humanitarian Law. The British Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raises the importance of regularised access to healthcare with the Israeli authorities. We recognise that under International Humanitarian Law, Israel, as the occupying power, has a duty of ensuring and maintaining public health to the fullest extent of the means available to it. The wounded and ill in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) should be able to access the urgent medical care they need.”*

*More broadly, I firmly believe it is time for the UK Government to take action to ensure that a two-state solution remains a viability, and that the cycle of violence in the region is replaced with a sustainable peace. That includes immediately recognising Palestine as a sovereign independent state, legislating to cease trade with illegal settlements in Palestinian territory, and helping fund peace initiatives such as an International Peace fund to foster trust between communities.*

*We remain committed to a two-state solution in which Israel and Palestine both exist with secure boundaries based on the 1967 lines with two capitals in Jerusalem recognised in international law with normal relations (including diplomatic, security and trade relations) between them and with their neighbours.*

*Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.*

*Yours sincerely*

*Sarah Olney*

*Member of Parliament for Richmond Park*

A pre-printed card referring to the receipt of Phil's letter was received from Ed Davey, saying 'the contents of which have been noted'. There has been no response from Munira Wilson.

### Home demolition in Al-Walajah village

Please write urgently to your MP and ask them to contact the Foreign Secretary to pressure their Israeli counterparts to immediately stop the threatened destruction of six homes in Al-Walajah village. Template & more info at [www.amostrust.org/urgent-al-walaja-news](http://www.amostrust.org/urgent-al-walaja-news)



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**Subs and newsletter**

Is your membership subscription overdue? See the code at the top of the address label on this newsletter – the year followed by the month when your membership expires, eg 202307 means your sub was due at the end of July 2023. Or, if you pay by standing order, please check that you are paying the correct amount. See panel above for rates and Treasurer's address (cheques to Kingston Peace Council/CND). If you would like to receive your copy of Kingston Peace News by email, please contact Gill at [gill@gillhurle.plus.com](mailto:gill@gillhurle.plus.com)

## Dates for your Diary

**Sats 2&16 Sept and 7 Oct** 11am-2pm KPC stall in Kingston Market Place. If you are able to help, please contact Angie on 020 8399 5537 or [angecooper47@hotmail.com](mailto:angecooper47@hotmail.com) (see also item below re. Peace Day).

**4-15 Sept** Days of action against DSEI, including KPC action on 13 Sept - see pages 1-2.

**Tues 12 Sept** 8pm KPC/CND meeting via Zoom. For details contact Gill, [gill@gillhurle.plus.com](mailto:gill@gillhurle.plus.com)

**Wed 13 Sept** 7-8pm CND webinar discussing DSEI, how arms fairs contribute to global instability, and why peace campaigners must resist the return of DSEI to London. Speakers include: Rokhsana Fiaz, Mayor of Newham; Richard Norton-Taylor, former Guardian defence and security editor, Board of DeclassifiedUK; and Kirsten Bayes, Local Outreach Coordinator, Campaign Against Arms Trade. Chaired by Kate Hudson, CND General Secretary. See <https://cnduk.org/events/selling-death-why-we-must-resist-the-dsei-arms-fair-cnd-webinar/>

**Thur 14 Sept** 7.30-8.30pm Youth and Student CND meeting. If you are 25 and under or a full-time student, join the September monthly meeting to find out more. See <https://cnduk.org/events/youth-and-student-cnd-meeting/>

**Mon 18 Sept** 7-8.30pm Talk (plus Q&A) by a delegation from a medical charity working in Al Shu'fat refugee camp near Jerusalem, St Mary's Church, Church Street, Twickenham TW1 3NJ. Free, but please register at [www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/698990087167](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/698990087167) Richmond & Kingston PSC

**Sat 23 Sept** CND Day of Action: Stop US nukes coming to Britain! See <https://cnduk.org/events/stop-us-nukes-coming-to-britain-day-of-action/>

**Sat 23 Sept** 7.30pm 'The Mistake' by Michael Mears, Riverhouse Barn Arts Centre, Manor Rd, Walton-on-Thames, KT12 2PF. Exploring the events surrounding the catastrophic 'mistake' that launched our nuclear age. Following a sell-out run in London earlier this year, KPC has contributed to the cost of a nationwide tour of this play, after the Arts Council withdrew funding. The performance will be followed by a Q and A with the cast for those who can stay. Booking: 01932 253354.

**Sat 7 Oct** am CND AGM, free to attend online for all paid-up members of National CND <https://cnduk.org/about/cnd-conference/conference-2023/>

**Sat 28 Oct** CND Policy Conference, in Manchester & online. £12 for CND members. See <https://cnduk.org/about/cnd-conference/conference-2023/>

## International Day of Peace

### Peace Day stall, Sat 16 September

KPC will commemorate United Nations International Day of Peace by holding a special stall at our usual location in Kingston Market Place. We shall invite passers-by to write their own peace message on a paper dove provided by us, and to hang their dove on our 'peace tree'. The tree will be on display afterwards in All Saints Church.

We need extra helpers for this stall, so if you are able to assist, any time between 11am and 2pm, please email Angie [angecooper47@hotmail.com](mailto:angecooper47@hotmail.com) or 'phone her on 020 8399 5537.

### School visits

Prior to the Covid years, members of KPC visited local schools around the International Day of Peace in September, to give assemblies on the theme of peace.

We are hoping to be able to reintroduce this practice with some of the schools we have visited previously, and will report on this in the next newsletter.