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KINGSTON PEACE NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF KINGSTON PEACE COUNCIL /
CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

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NATO wishes you a Happy New War

Hawks, media and politicians singing from the same hymn sheet

We've got used to war mongering NATO chiefs telling us to get ready to fight Russia, and they are at it again. Backed up by national politicians and senior military figures, (and no doubt a gleeful arms industry) the chorus of 'spend more on weaponry' was deafening just as the end of the year approached.

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte - a former conservative Dutch prime minister - was telling us we must all "get ready for war like our grandparents endured". Needless to say, any future war would not be like our grandparents endured because now both sides have nuclear weapons!

The NATO chief's clarion call followed the publication of a policy document from the American government (it was unclear who the author was) basically saying the US was turning its back on Europe.

Chatham House, the UK foreign policy thinktank, summed up the US's policy shift succinctly. It was: "Trump's new national

security strategy: cut deals, hammer Europe, and tread gently around autocrats".

Whereas the previous Trump administration and the Biden one that followed branded Russia and China as enemies the new document identifies China as

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KPC member Hilary Evans was among those presenting a letter to the Prime Minister in November to express deep concern about the UK's decision to buy American aircraft designed to drop nuclear bombs. (See article Page 2)

AGM

KPC's annual general meeting will be held on Tuesday 10th February, 2026

This is an in-person meeting held at The Druid's Head Kingston Market Place

7.30pm



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NATO wishes you a Happy New War

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merely an economic competitor while Trump's admiration for Putin is well known.

The thought of the US, Russia and China no longer being characterised as deadly enemies should be a plus for world peace but, ironically, Europe is now emerging as the troublemaker.

Trump has signalled on a number of occasions that he is disdainful of the EU and NATO (except he's happy to carry on selling US weapons to anyone and to site American nuclear bombs and missiles throughout Western Europe).

Onto the streets

Meanwhile, European leaders - especially Starmer, Germany's Merz and France's Macron - have lined up to indicate ongoing support for Ukraine even if it means NATO fighting Russia. This brought thousands of French citizens onto the streets of Paris recently to protest that they were unwilling to die in a NATO inspired war.

The EU meanwhile had planned to use the frozen Russian money held in European banks to pay for more support for Ukraine. That would actually have been illegal under the rules of international banking and if the Eurocrats that thought this up either altered or ignored the legal framework to make that possible then Europe would have signalled that nobody's money is safely invested in European banks or institutions. This would have had dire consequences for all European economies.

Scheme dropped

In the event, against clear opposition from Italy, Belgium and others, the scheme was dropped and the EU managed to magic up a loan to Ukraine of another 90 billion Euros from its own funds. In their obsession with supporting Ukraine at all costs the Eurocrats and our own prime minister appear to be on the verge of actually destroying the EU plus NATO. Russia must be enjoying the spectacle.

One final point. The BBC-hating right-wing press gloated over the fact that the national broadcaster had selectively edited Trump's speech to his supporters before they stormed the US Capitol in 2020. Yet the *Telegraph*, *Mail*

and Sky News fell over themselves in December to headline that Russia was 'ready to go to war with Europe' helpfully feeding into the narrative being pushed by NATO. But the quote from President Putin was used selectively. He was actually recorded as saying: "We are not planning to go to war with Europe but if Europe wants to, and starts, we are ready right now."

Why is NATO's leadership plus weak, or is it just stupid, European leaders seemingly determined to give Putin that excuse?

Letter to Starmer

National CND co-ordinated a letter to Sir Keir Starmer opposing the planned purchase of US-made F-35 aircraft and nuclear free-fall bombs that would be stored at RAF Marham. The letter was handed in to Downing Street in November.

Among the signatories were leaders of eight trade unions, Stop the War Coalition, Campaign Against Arms Trade, Pax Christi, the Muslim Association of Great Britain, the Campaign Against Climate Change, Scientists for Global Responsibility, the Movement for the Abolition of War and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Among individual signatories were actor Maxine Peake, fashion designer Katherine Hamnett, filmmaker Ken Loach and author Victoria Brittain.

Among the points made in the letter is the cost of a Trident replacement of at least £205 billion and a further £2.5 billion for the aircraft. It goes on to attack what it describes as "the war-mongering rhetoric to justify these spending levels [which] is also strengthening the racist, divisive politics of the far right which is further destabilising our communities and threatening our democratic rights."

The letter continues: "We believe that your drive to 'war readiness', undermines national security and economic stability. Research shows that military spending is among the least effective ways to create jobs or stimulate long-term economic growth. Furthermore, your plans to more closely integrate the Ministry of Defence with the Department for Education risk damaging the educational and life choices of our young people."

The letter concludes: "We urge you to reverse this disastrous war drive."

Waging war against embryos

A single, precisely targeted Israeli shell, out of the many hundreds of thousands fired at and within Gaza during the ongoing war, helped convince a prominent UN official that genocide was intended.

A *Guardian* report from early November quoted South African judge Navi Pillay, a former chair of the UN's Commission of Inquiry into the Occupied Territory of Palestine and Israel.

The Israeli shell hit the Al-Basma Fertility Clinic in December 2023 and in so doing wiped out 4000 Palestinian embryos. The strike was "intended to prevent births" among Palestinians in Gaza, claims Pillay.

The *Guardian* quotes her as follows: "That clinic stands alone in the grounds, separate from the rest of the hospital buildings. They didn't fire on the hospital – if the excuse is that Hamas is hiding in the hospitals, they didn't touch the hospital. They came straight to this building and targeted and hit the nitrogen tanks that kept the embryos alive."

Pillay cites the attack not as a totality, but as a signal example, one among "a great number" of incidents, that led to her UN Commission's finding that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza. Their report is titled *Legal analysis of the conduct of Israel in Gaza pursuant to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*. It was published last September in Geneva.

For its part, Israel claimed its forces did not target civilian infrastructure. However, an estimated 84% of the buildings in Gaza have been destroyed or damaged. This includes all medical facilities in the Strip.

Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP), an organisation that provides essential equipment, medicines and supplies to the Palestinian people, has been spotlighting the work being carried out by doctors and other medical staff, such as nurses and midwives, in almost impossible conditions. MAP provided the equipment needed to establish the Paediatric and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Patient's Friend Benevolent Society (PFBS) Hospital when it was the only facility in Gaza City providing these services.

Unimaginable conditions

Dr Hisham Abu Aoun is serving as head of that unit at PFBS, working in unimaginable conditions to save lives every day. Each day, he and his colleagues work to keep newborns alive, despite critical shortages of essential equipment, resources, and medicines.

Asked why he does what he does Dr Hisham told MAP: "Staying here to care for the babies in the incubators and intensive care, checking on them constantly, has become a quiet source of strength. It gives me a strange sense of peace, something that makes me love my work even more, despite everything happening around us."

MAP also reports that in the past two years Israel's military have killed more than 1700 health workers.

Anyone wishing to support the work of medical staff like Dr Hashem and MAP can do so here:

[Donate today](#)

Military top brass call for end to arms sales

A group of high-ranking former British military officers ruined Sir Kier Starmer's Christmas by writing to the Prime Minister in late December calling for a total UK arms embargo on Israel. They also wanted the British Army to cease all military collaboration with Israel, citing documented evidence of war crimes against the Palestinians.

The letter's signatories included one Lieutenant General, two Major Generals and two Brigadiers. Their previous responsibilities involved commanding the British Army in Afghanistan, serving as senior British Officer for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and a former defence attaché in Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

They argued the UK's current partial suspension of arms sales was insufficient. Also, the enrolment of Israeli officers on UK military courses must stop, as should all business with Israeli-linked defence firms such as Elbit Systems. (see also article Page 6)

Gaza compared to Hiroshima: UN official



Hiroshima (left) and Gaza (above)

A UN official recently told the BBC that driving through Gaza City was like “going through the ruins of Hiroshima.” Tom Fletcher, Head of the UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, was speaking to the BBC’s Nick Robinson. The full interview is available here [**BBC Sounds**](#).

The reference to Hiroshima is indeed poignant, coming as it has during the 80th Anniversary year of the dropping of the two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

As a result of new footage of the destruction of Gaza the comparison indeed seems a valid one.

Latest data estimates that Israeli forces have dropped 85,000 tonnes of bombs on Gaza which is greater than the total combined weight of bombs dropped on London, Dresden and Hamburg during World War Two. The total explosive force of the Israeli bombardment is reckoned to be six times that of the atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima.

Suicides spike among Israeli troops

Recent data indicates the toll that the war on Gaza is taking on the mental health of Israel’s soldiers. Since the beginning of the military action on October 7, 2023 between 7,500 and 10,000 soldiers have been treated for PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and other mental health conditions directly attributed to the conflict.

The majority of the Israel Defence Force soldiers are reservists and they have been particularly badly affected by the actions they have been ordered to pursue against the Palestinian people, especially it seems the targeting of women and young children.

Many armies collate information about such mental issues but the current figures concerning suicides among active military personnel are instructive.

The statistics for the United States military is 26 suicides per 100,000 troops, in the UK the figure is 9-11 per 100,000. In the Israeli Defence Force it is now 150 per 100,000, most of whom are reservists.

The *Times of Israel* reported that between January 2024 and July 2025 279 IDF soldiers have also attempted suicide. For every soldier who actually succeeded in taking their own life seven others had made an attempt to do so. The report went on to clarify that only serving soldiers were included in the figures which did not include veterans who took their own lives after completing military service.

An internal military investigation last August concluded that most of the suicides were as a result of psychological trauma.

The 'myth' of tactical nuclear weapons

The concept of Tactical Nuclear Weapons being used without sparking a worldwide conflagration was a myth and politicians needed to wake up to this fact.

This was the clear belief of those taking part in an online discussion in December organised by British Pugwash and hosted by the Nuclear Education Trust which had just published *Stepping Back From The Brink – The Myths of Tactical Nuclear Weapons and Limited Nuclear War*.

Taking part in the event were report author Dr Tim Street, former Labour Defence Secretary Lord Des Browne and chief executive of the United Nations Association UK Jane Kinninmont.

There was particular emphasis on the UK Government's recent decision to purchase American F-35 aircraft capable of dropping nuclear bombs, described by Dr Street in his opening comments as "inherently destabilising."

There was, he said, no agreed definition of what Tactical Nuclear Weapons were. It was a term "dreamt up by the United States to make nuclear weapons seem more acceptable."

A mistake

"It's a mistake to think their use would have a limited impact. Their use would have very severe consequences." He went on: "how do you differentiate between a tactical and a larger nuclear weapon?" Many of the bombs and missiles being described as tactical had a much greater destructive power than the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs.

The US manufactures the B61-12 bomb – which would be dropped by the F-35 aircraft – and these were being sited across five or six Western European countries, including the UK, and this was clearly a political decision by the governments involved to try and keep the US locked into NATO despite the current White House's ambivalence towards the Alliance. It was also by no means clear, despite President Putin's bellicose statements, whether Russia had actually lowered the threshold for using nuclear weapons.

There had been, stressed Dr Street, no public discussion or debate about purchasing the planes and storing the bombs here. This was a point picked up by Lord Browne who said the

level of what he termed "nuclear literacy" was very low among Parliamentarians.

Paying tribute to Dr. Street's "extremely well researched, readable report" he said every minister in the MoD should see it. "I agree with every word in the report on Tactical Nuclear Weapons," he added.

Poised to lead

He said we had spoken to colleges in both the UK and US on the need to rid the world of nuclear weapons and that British citizens needed to pressure the Government and influence political institutions. "I am the only UK defence minister ever to have spoken at a disarmament conference," he said. With Gordon Brown as Premier and David Miliband as Foreign Secretary Britain had been poised to lead on nuclear disarmament in 2010 and it was not impossible for the country to do so again.

This theme was picked up by Jane Kinninmont who said January 2026 marked the 80th anniversary of the inaugural meeting of the UN General Assembly which had taken place in London. That first meeting's first resolution was to bring nuclear weapons under control. There was also the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) discussions due in April. Many agreed that the UK Government's decision to buy nuclear capable F-35 aircraft breached the NPT.

The nuclear weapons issue did not enjoy the same level of engagement worldwide as climate change but it should. "Let's get back to basics on this," she said. This, a number of speakers agreed, would be a way in which to energise young people to take seriously the issue of nuclear threats, by linking them to the climate emergency.

As an observer

Chairing the discussion, Labour backbencher Baroness Christine Blower, wondered if there was a possibility of getting the UK Government to engage with the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)? Ms Kinninmont responded that the UK should at least show up as an observer to TPNW meetings and listen, if not engage.

The linking of the climate emergency to nuclear proliferation was picked up by a number of those attending the online discussion. Lord Martin

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Israeli arms firm ‘must not train British troops’

More than 50 MPs representing most parties in Parliament have signed an Early Day Motion deprecating a plan – now held in abeyance – to pay an Israeli arms manufacturer to train British troops.

Led by four Labour and two independent MPs, including Jeremy Corbyn, the motion expressed deep concern that the MoD was considering awarding a £2billion, 15-year contract to Elbit Systems UK, a subsidiary of Israel’s largest arms manufacturer.

The motion noted that Elbit “supplies 85 percent of the drones used by the Israeli military, has been directly implicated in war crimes committed in Gaza, and was named in the July 2025 report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories as central to Israel’s plausibly genocidal conduct.”

The 56 signatories to the motion include, in addition to Labour members, Liberal Democrats (including Sarah Olney), SNP, Plaid Cymru, Greens and Independents. Conservatives and Reform UK are absent. The motion says there have been “warnings from Parliamentarians, human rights organisations and legal experts that awarding this contract would entrench Elbit at the

heart of the UK’s defence infrastructure, with serious reputational, legal and moral consequences” and furthermore, “would risk making the UK more complicit in war crimes being committed against the Palestinian people.” If it were not bad enough that the MoD would even consider, post Gaza, letting the Israelis train the British Army, *Private Eye* revealed further information that adds a new level of incredulity to this whole saga. In 2022, Elbit Systems UK was, reported the satirical magazine, kicked off two Royal Navy training programmes after its parent company, Elbit Systems Ltd, accessed highly sensitive British military information without authorisation.

The training programme involved the crew of the navy’s new nuclear submarines, part of a 12-year contract. Then Tory defence minister Alex Chalk issued what *Private Eye* describes as a vaguely worded statement announcing Elbit’s departure from the contract.

Also worth mentioning is that the Royal College of Defence Studies has also been training Israeli IDF soldiers but that this arrangement will also come to an end in 2026.

Donnie’s battleship plan is all at sea!

Donald Trump’s febrile attention seems to have shifted from plans for his huge golden ballroom which, if ever built, will dwarf the neighbouring White House, to a Golden Fleet of battleships.

Two days before Christmas he announced that he was ordering the US Navy to build the Trump Class of battleships that, as with everything connected with the 47th President, would have to be the “largest, deadliest, most versatile and best looking warships” etc etc etc.

Design of the vessels would be handled by the Navy and, Trump added, “along with me because I’m a very aesthetic person.” The aim is to start with two ships with the goal of building up to 25 with an estimated price tag of up to \$15 billion dollars each.

Just one problem. Battleships are obsolete naval technology. America retired or scrapped its remaining battleships in the 1990s.

Modern Naval warfare, as with conflict on land, is turning more to remotely piloted drones as Ukraine proved when it used small automated vessels packed full of explosives to cripple a number of the Russian naval vessels in the Black Sea. They also sank the fleet flagship the Moskva with anti-ship missiles in 2022.

Trump also boasted that his new vessels would be bristling with weaponry such as hypersonic missiles (which the US has yet to develop) and they would carry nuclear weapons.

American military commentators (retired) began describing the proposed naval vessels as ‘big floating targets’; a description that Russia and China have previously awarded to both US and British aircraft carriers.

This battleship plan is the latest in Trump’s obsession with creating a legacy for when he is no longer in office. American satirist and late-night show host Jimmy Kimmel noted that the first of the new vessels would be called the USS Defiant, presumably “because the name USS Trump’s Ego was already taken”.

UN rebukes UK over treatment of hunger strikers

UN officials have expressed “grave concern” for the lives and fundamental rights of eight pro-Palestinian activists who have been taking part in a hunger strike in protest at their treatment in prison. “Hunger strike is often a measure of last resort by people who believe that their rights to protest and effective remedy have been exhausted,” said the UN experts in a statement.

“The state’s duty of care toward hunger strikers is heightened, not diminished.

The eight hunger strikers began refusing food and drink while on remand in prison following their arrest.

Medical care

The UN officials’ comments were in respect of the treatment of the hunger strikers while in prison, awaiting a trial date, which was not expected to be set for a minimum of 18 months.

Among the UN experts were Gina Romero, special rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

Among their criticism of the UK Government’s

treatment of the hunger strikers, some of whom had paused their action as *KP News* went to press, was concern at reported delays in accessing medical care, use of excessive restraint during hospital treatment and denial of contact with family members and legal counsel as well as a lack of consistent independent medical oversight.

The issue of proper medical care was also addressed by doctors writing to *The Guardian*. The doctors stressed that the hunger strikers had not faced trial with some dates set as late as 2027. They wrote: “The damaging effects of prolonged remand on mental health are well known.”

Some 800 medical professionals appealed to Justice Secretary David Lammy to meet the hunger strikers’ lawyers and address their grievances. He refused.

A doctor, in a separate letter to *The Guardian*, commented: “I call on the government to act now, before the grim warning of the hunger strikers’ lawyers is realised, that “young British citizens will die in prison, having never even been convicted of an offence.”

Ukraine war COs speak out in unique event

Four conscientious objectors, three Russian and one Ukrainian, took part in an online discussion, speaking of their experiences and resistance to military conscription. The online event was organised by, among others, the Peace Pledge Union, Movement for the Abolition of War, The Quakers and Pax Christi.

The four CO’s, whose comments were not recorded for their own safety, spoke of fleeing their home countries to seek refuge elsewhere. They said hundreds of thousands of people had refused to fight in the war in Ukraine.

Also addressing the podcast was Mikheil Elizbarashvili, a Georgian campaigner from the Peace and Service Network who offers counselling to COs and supports them in their search for a safe haven.

MoD and US estimates suggest that Russia has sustained up to 1million and Ukraine 400,000 casualties (killed plus wounded) since the war started.

The ‘myth’ of tactical nuclear weapons

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Rees, the Astronomer Royal, said one route was through universities. Lord Browne mentioned the European Leadership Network, a pan-European thinktank of which he was chair and which had a “substantial younger involvement.”

The Nuclear Education Trust (NET) confirmed that all members of the Parliamentary Defence and Foreign Affairs Committees were being sent copies of Dr Street’s report. The report can be downloaded, free of charge, from the NET via this link:

<https://nucleareducationtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Web-FINAL-011225-NET-TNW-LNW-.pdf>

“Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding”

Albert Einstein

KINGSTON PEACE COUNCIL / CND

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Help with the stall

Our regular KPC stall in
Kingston Market Place is
held on the first and third
Saturday of each month. If
you wish to join us to help
hand out leaflets to passers-
by please let us know.
Contact Angie Cooper on
0208 399 5537 or email:
angecooper47@hotmail.com

Dates for your Diary

Sunday 25th January

London CND Annual Conference. Online. 12pm to 2.30pm. Speakers will include: Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP on Racism and War; Asad Rehman, Friends of the Earth on Climate Crisis and War; Ryvka Barnard, PSC, on Gaza, the Occupied Territories; Kate Hudson, CND, on the Global Implications of the Ukraine War, and Carol Turner, London CND, on Trump and NATO.

More information plus registration:

<https://www.londoncnd.org/events/2025/12/19/london-cnd-annual-conference-2026>

Saturday 31st January

Challenging the War Machine – a Declassified Summit. An event for anyone interested in understanding the UK's war machine, how it operates and how to challenge it. The summit will bring together journalists, activists, academics, Declassified contributors, and supporters as well as interested people from across the UK. All are welcome! There will be plenty of time for discussion and questions. The event will also be host to other independent media organisations and movement groups. A full speakers list will be announced soon and will include input from CND, Codepink, Stop the War Coalition and Campaign Against Arms Trade.

Venue: Earth, 11-17 Stoke Newington Road, London N16 88H

Purchase a ticket: <https://tinyurl.com/3hfxdd8d>.

Saturday 31st January

National March for Palestine. We march again to demand an end to British support for nuclear-armed Israel's occupation and ongoing genocide. Assembly point to be announced. Protest called by: Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Friends of Al-Aqsa, Stop the War Coalition, Muslim Association of Britain, Palestinian Forum in Britain, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Assemble 12 noon in central London, assembly point to be announced. More details: <https://cnduk.org/events/end-the-genocide-national-march-for-palestine-3/>

Tuesday 10th February

Kingston Peace Council AGM 7.30pm. Druid's Head, Kingston Market Place

Saturday 28th February

Stop British Nuke Jets. The government has announced it is buying 12 nuclear-capable fighter jets. This is a significant expansion of its nuclear capabilities, meaning that Britain will be able to launch nuclear weapons from both the sea and sky. Join us at Marham to say loud and clear we want to stop this nuclear expansion and scrap Britain's nuclear weapons altogether. Assemble at RAF Marham, Upper Marham, King's Lynn PE33 9NP. Coach bring organised from London, More information to follow, but in the meantime please contact 020 7700 2393 with any queries. See also <https://cnduk.org/events/stop-british-nuke-jets-national-demonstration-at-raf-marham/>

STOP PRESS

As *KP News* went to press the BBC reported that Israel had banned 37 international aid organisations working in Gaza and the West Bank. These included Médecins sans Frontier, Medical Aid for Palestinians and the Norwegian Refugee Council. Israel claimed the reason was that the organisations had failed to supply adequate information about who worked for the aid bodies. Ten countries, including the UK, have complained to Israel