

Update Nov/Dec 2023

Northern Friends Peace Board

nfpb@gn.apc.org 01204 382330
<http://nfpb.org.uk> Charity SC 024632



NFPB meetings

Northern Friends Peace Board members met in Edinburgh (and online) on 26 September, and will be meeting again in Bolton on 2 December (again, with online participation also possible).

At our **September** meeting, we heard updates of peace activities in Scotland, including those of the groups Secure Scotland and Peace and Justice Scotland, now in shared premises in Edinburgh. The Peace at the Heart exhibition put together by Quakers in Britain had been launched at the Parliament in Edinburgh that week and Ellis Brooks from QPSW gave an account of that work.

At the other end of the British Isles, NFPB members had been active with *Quaker Roots* witnessing against the DSEI arms fair in London. Friends who had been part of that witness shared their experiences and learning. NFPB had helped host an online Meeting for Worship at the time of the witness, which was well attended and appreciated by those online and those taking an active part in the witness.

Trustees and the NFPB Coordinator gave updates about our finances and other work undertaken since the previous meeting, and NFPB members shared information and reflections from recent peace activities at the local level. NFPB members joined Friends in Meetings for worship and witness for peace the following morning at Faslane and in Princess Street Gardens in Edinburgh.

At our **December** meeting we shall be considering responses to the war in Palestine and Israel, and also looking ahead to different ways of holding our meetings in 2024. We shall be looking at a wider mix of hybrid, regional, and online-only meeting opportunities in order to enable fuller participation by all our members and reach a wider group of Friends. Interested Friends in the areas in which our meetings are held are warmly welcomed.

Palestine and Israel

In the week after the outbreak of violent hostilities in Israel and Gaza, NFPB joined with other members of the Network of Christian Peace Organisations in writing **open letter to the Foreign Secretary**, then James Cleverley. The letter called for a ceasefire, humanitarian corridors and urgent action to address the roots of the conflict and to work for a sustainable and just peace.

The letter (<https://ncpo.org.uk/israel-gaza-october23>) said, in part:

We are deeply saddened by the continued violence in the region and urge you work for dialogue and de-escalation. We ask you to support measures for the immediate protection

of civilians including a ceasefire, adherence by all parties to international law, and the UN's call for humanitarian corridors.

Long held concerns about land, peace and security have not been prioritised by the international community. The only way to break the cycle of violence and build a lasting peace is to end the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the blockade of Gaza and create conditions of justice, equality and peace for all Israelis and Palestinians.

As people of faith, we stand against the Islamophobia and antisemitism many individuals in this country may face as a result of violence in the Middle East. We will do what we can to de-escalate these tensions.

We ask you to avoid supporting polarised arguments and apportioning blame. We ask you to support measures that do not rely on military security but instead build a lasting peace based on justice and equality for all.

On 19th October we hosted an **online meeting** for Friends to reflect on their concerns and experiences, fears, hopes and possible actions. In the session, we heard a plea to remember the humanity of all involved – people are not numbers. And we were encouraged to consider our own role; this might be to speak out and to challenge a narrative of vengeance, or to listen and make links with people in this country who have been hurt by this most recent outbreak of extreme violence. It was important to seek out alternative sources of information and experience. The session was introduced by an excerpt from a short vigil online by American Friends of the Parents' Circle - <https://youtu.be/w-k5TUvKOF4?t=497>

NFPB has also included a significant number of links to resources in two issues of our **Peace Round-up**, which are available to download via:
<https://nfpb.org.uk/resources/publicity-information-outreach/#peace-round-up>

EMES* Peace and Service Network

We were represented at the gathering of this network in October by NFPB member Till Geiger. The network also has monthly online meetings, through which it has been a means for Friends to share concerns, news and information, and to develop ways of collaborating on issues such as conscientious objection in the context of the war in Ukraine.



Friends World Committee
for Consultation
EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST SECTION

The weekend gathering in October (with online participation as well as meeting together in Brussels) considered in some depth the nature of networking and the process for Quakers speaking out or making statements publicly. It also identified specific areas for future collaboration and joint working between members of the network. And of course spent significant time hearing from Friends concerning the violent conflicts in Ukraine and in Israel and Palestine. See <https://fwccemes.org/news/quaker-attention-on-peace-in-Israel-and-Palestine> .

The weekly online Meeting for Worship that was set up in response to the war in Ukraine continues, with a concern to pray for peace in all parts of the EMES section – see <https://fwccemes.org/calendar/ukraine-worship>

* Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation

Banner kits



We now have a new set of kits available, comprising materials and instructions for making one-person rainbow vertical 'Quakers for Peace' banners. These are available from us at the price of £10 – please email nfpb@gn.apc.org with your order and for details of how to make payments.

Working with others to promote a shift in priorities

Rethinking Security's work on the Alternative Security Review continues, as does our involvement with the network's



**Alternative
Security
Review**

outreach group. The review's Human Security Strategy is

being launched early next year, and in the meantime a series of webinars is now under way that seek to challenge the established, bipartisan consensus about what security is and how it is best created. For more information about these webinars, go to:

<https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/home/events/reclaiming-security-webinar-series>. A podcast

series has also now been completed – all 7 episodes can be heard via

<https://soundcloud.com/rethinking-security>.

Meanwhile, the UK working group for the Global Campaign on Military Spending (GCOMS) has appointed Russell Whiting to help take the work



forward over the coming period. With climate change affecting human security across the planet, the need for a shift in spending priorities is a case that this campaign will continue to make, particularly in the April-May period next year, designated 'Global Days of Action on Military Spending'. To sign up to the GCOMS mailing list or just find out more, go to:

<https://demilitarize.org.uk/>

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

NFPB has joined organisations from a range of faith organisations and communities in signing the **Joint Interfaith Statement to the Second Meeting of States Parties (2MSP) to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons**, from which the following are extracts:

We take great joy in the existence of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and take this occasion of the Second Meeting of States Parties to celebrate how the TPNW and its supporters worldwide have found the courage, determination and imagination to work for a world of justice and equality. ...

As diplomats, policy makers, advocates and activists gather in New York City this week [beginning 27 November], we know their work is supported by a much larger circle of people around the world who believe that another world without nuclear weapons is possible and who will continue to work, write, march, pray, chant, meditate and speak that new world into being. Nuclear weapons can never provide nourishment for our bodies,

courage for our hearts, creativity for our minds or inspiration for our souls. Nuclear weapons can only annihilate, threaten and destroy everything that gives our lives meaning. Nuclear weapons drain financial resources away from addressing poverty, racism, illness and premature death. And yet, we remain resilient and vibrant in the face of their obliteration, refusing to let nuclear ideology also steal our hope, our vision and our boldness in demanding justice and a right to live in peace for all people.

See also our information page at: <https://nfpb.org.uk/tpnw-info/>

New on our website

Review – *Inner Healing, Inner Peace: A Quaker Perspective*, John Lampen, Diana Lampen – (Christian Alternative/Quaker Quicks)

<https://nfpb.org.uk/voices/review-inner-healing-inner-peace/>

Calendar listings (a selection)

- Wednesday 29 November — **Living our Peace Testimony in Complex Times**
<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/courses/living-our-peace-testimony-in-complex-times/>
 - Friday 1 December – **Prisoners for Peace Day**
https://wri-irg.org/en/campaigns/prisoners_for_peace
 - 24 January – 21 February 2024 - **Rethinking Security: steps to sustainable peace with justice** <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/courses/rethinking-security-steps-to-sustainable-peace-with-justice/>
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Thank you!

We are very grateful for all the support that Friends have given during this year – time and energy, ideas, concerns and experience, and financial contributions. Our work is very much a collective effort and we look forward to continuing to develop our work during 2024.

Support for Meetings: Please do get in touch if you would like to explore how Northern Friends Peace Board might contribute to your Meeting's activities in some way, from resources to short workshops, webinars, connecting with others etc.

Interested Friends are also very welcome to join us at our Meetings.

Previous NFPB Updates and reports of our work (including our accounts and trustees' reports) are available via <https://nfpb.org.uk/resources/updates-and-reports/>

Donations: We are working to get the set-up for making payments via our website functioning again, but in the meantime please either contact us (nfpb@gn.apc.org) or see the information about making financial contributions on our website at <https://nfpb.org.uk/donate/>

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Quaker Meeting House, 50 Silverwell Street, Bolton BL1 1PP

Charity: SC 024632

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