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PEACE & JUSTICE

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2019-2020

NEWS



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Hong Kong: Five demands, not one less

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XR & a London Plane Tree

Edinburgh Peace & Justice Centre

Working in Scotland since 1980 to promote:
Nonviolence ♦ Conflict Resolution ♦ Human Rights ♦ Ecological Sustainability
Creating a Culture of Peace

Opposing War Memorial
 Peacebuilding for Primary Schools – Promoting Nuclear Disarmament –
 Origami Peace Cranes Project - Diary of Events
 Desk & meeting space – Peace & Justice News

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Editor's Introduction

In this Peace & Justice News there's lots of Centre News. From Embroidery workshops for community engagement on the Opposing War Memorial project, to publication of The Legacies of Resistance to the First World War booklet and from an exciting new component called Collaborative Classrooms in the Peacebuilders programme for primary schools, to the origami cranes project nearly at its goal. Find out how you can be involved in the next phase of this project.

Plus there's news of our involvement in XR Peace, and how to get involved in a P&J Affinity Group. Check out all the great volunteer opportunities too, from blogging to editing, to counting cranes and putting up posters. Peace & Justice depends on its people and there are lots of ways for you to be part of it.

Former P&J volunteer Federico Marchioli, now a Programme Manager with an NGO in Nepal writes about the shocking extent to which gender disparity prevails in Nepal and, as in many countries, is rooted in local customs, and traditions.

Two of our newest volunteers Elena Deamant and Anna Karisto cover two diverse existential struggles. Lane gives an update on the Hong Kong protesters herculean efforts to hold

on to their freedom while Anna surveys the global effort to eliminate nuclear weapons once and for all.

Lastly, Peace & Justice Coordinator Brian Larkin reflects on the tree that led him to arrest with Extinction Rebellion.

The Editors



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Centre News

Opposing War Memorial: **Embroidery Workshops for** **Community Engagement**

Opposing War Memorial artist Kate Ive ran Embroidery workshops in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee in November, giving people an opportunity to participate in the Memorial project. *All Embroidery workshop photos by Kate Ive.*



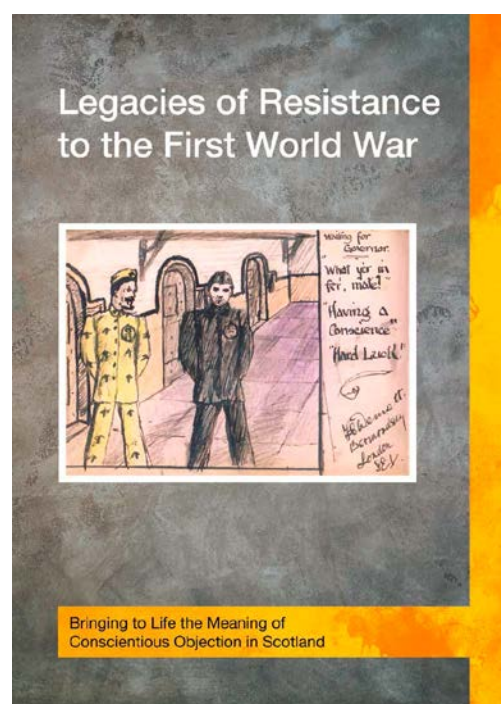
Nineteen people took part, including two whose fathers or grandfathers were COs, one who had never embroidered, one from Glasgow's Embroiderer's Guild and a refugee family from Somalia, a mum & four children. There were great discussions. Participants said they really enjoyed it and all produced finished embroidered handkerchiefs with symbols of peace, disarmament or conscientious objection.

One participant said she would like to take up embroidery having tried it for the first time. All the children showed great concentration. The two primary school age boys really took to it and one boy (P6) said he found it relaxing and wanted to buy an embroidery kit and to keep going.

The groups were very mixed, from the reason they were participating to their experience level of embroidery. There were participants that attend Peace & Justice events, relatives of COs and those that support anything to do with peace to creative makers. With a mix of ages, there were participants who have never embroidered before to very experienced, professional embroiderers. There was a real sense of openness and sharing of skills, knowledge and stories, not to mention some really beautiful and



personal hankies made too! Special thanks to Margaret Ferguson Burns for helping out and helping create a relaxed environment.



Legacies of Resistance to the First World War

We edited the *Legacies of Resistance to the First World War* booklet and gave inputs to the adult learner course. The booklet presents the outcome of the adult learners' research and celebrates the lives of about 30 First World War Conscientious Objectors from Dundee, Glasgow and Edinburgh. *The booklet can be downloaded as a pdf from our website or contact us to request print copies.*

Peace & Justice at Conscience Peace Tax Campaign International Conference

P&J Coordinator Brian Larkin welcomed delegates to the Conscience Peace Tax Conference to Scotland in November. Read his remarks at: <http://peaceandjustice.org.uk/blog/>

Opposing War Memorial

We have now raised almost £64,000 for the memorial, so we're more than a third of the way to our goal! To commission the sculpture we need to raise £100,000 more. Our grant applications will be strengthened by the public support that has been demonstrated by donations received.



Confirmation of our preferred site in Princes St Gardens still awaits landscaping plans for the Ross Development. In November we asked P&J contacts to input on the importance of celebrating our Peacemaking Heritage in our public spaces. Thanks to everyone who did so.

If you have not already done so **please consider donating to the Memorial.** If you've already donated could you invite a friend to do so by sharing with them the link to the website or a brochure?



Email us to request brochures to place in your church or community centre or just to share with friends.

Donate By Bank Transfer: Bank of Scotland account: Edinburgh Peace & Justice Centre. A/C No: 00207018 / Sort Code: 80-11-30 Ref: Opposing War

By cheque made out to Edinburgh Peace & Justice Centre. Post to Edinburgh Peace & Justice Centre, Central Edinburgh Methodist Church, 25 Nicolson Square, Edinburgh EH8 9BX with a note that the donation is for the Opposing War Memorial.

To Donate by bank card or credit card visit

www.opposingwar.scot/donate/

Peacebuilding for Schools

Fiona Oliver-Larkin, who has been a Facilitator on this project since 2015 has stepped into the role of Programme Coordinator. Drawing on feedback from partner schools and peer programmes Emma Quayle and Fiona have developed a new Peacebuilders programme - Collaborative Classrooms – which builds on our Cooperative Games course. CC will offer schools assessment for building a culture of peace and deliver trainings for children and adults in Nonviolent Communication (NVC), Restorative Practice (RP) and Peer Mediation. We are due to run the pilot at Parsons Green Primary where we've run the Cooperative Games course in four class groups.

Seven new people attended our September 2019 new facilitator training. Three of them have now completed placements on our Cooperative Games programme in schools so we have nine fully trained Co-operative games facilitators. We are scheduled to run the Cooperative Games course with six class groups in three different schools in January. Facilitators meet at regular **Play and Connect** sessions to share experience and learn from each other.

Peacebuilders Facilitators Fiona and Elena.





Image: Margaret Ferguson Burns

140,000 Origami Peace Cranes: Thanks to Kath, Mila, Frank, Heather, Margaret and Danuta!

Thanks to everyone who has contributed cranes so far. Special thanks to Kath Macdonald for contributing over 5,000 origami peace cranes and to Heather Kiernan for making 6,000, bringing us to a total now of over 130,000! Both Kath and Heather have organized workshops in the Borders over the past few years. Thanks also to Margaret Ferguson Burns who has regularly been making origami cranes with refugees in Calais.

Thanks also to Mila (pictured left) who very generously provided space for storage of 25 boxes of cranes in her loft for the past year. And to Danuta who is now providing space for them as Mila is moving away. It seems that whenever we ask for something we need the universe, or at least our circle of friends is there to provide.

Cranes Exhibition Group

We hope to organise an exhibition, probably in August 2020 to mark the 75th anniversary of Hiroshima and we hope, to celebrate the ratification, by then, of the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty. Once ratified



by 50 states the Treaty (TPNW) will become international law. ***Want to help organize the exhibition?*** We're looking for a few people who have been involved in making all these wonderful cranes to work with a community exhibition curator early in the coming year on this. ***Get in touch to let us know you want more information about this.***

Don't Bank on the Bomb. About 25 people attended the launch of the 2019 *Stop Funding the End of the World* report in November. Report author Linda Pearson gave highlights from the report. Renfrewshire Councillor and Nuclear Free Local Authorities Scotland Co-convenor Audrey Doig spoke about the importance of contacting Councillors personally and Green MSP John Finnie

addressed the ongoing issue of the Scottish Parliamentary Pension Scheme continuing to invest in UK Trident submarines.



The report available at: nukedivestmentscotland.org has info on how to contact local Councillors to urge them to demand divestment of pension funds. Local Authorities in

Renfrewshire, Dumbartonshire and Midlothian have called for pension funds to be divested. The more of us who write to our Councillors the greater the chance of success. The Peace & Justice Centre is a founding partner in the Don't Bank on the Bomb Scotland Network.

ICAN Youth Conference in Paris

On February 14 and 15, 2020, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear weapons will be hosting an ICAN Campaign Forum in Paris. The Forum will bring together students and campaigners from around the world to learn from ICAN's work on the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear weapons, and empower participants to get involved in. Young people who want to campaign to ban nuclear weapons with us are encouraged to attend. **Contact the P&J for more information. We may be able to help with raising funds for travel costs.** *As an affiliate of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons Peace & Justice is a co-recipient of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize.*

P&J & XR Peace. At our AGM in September, following a gentle peace walk through Princes St Gardens, the Peace & Justice Centre decided to affiliate to XR Peace and held a workshop on Militarism and Climate Change.

P&J Coordinator Brian Larkin has been active as Media Coordinator for XR Peace and was arrested three times during the October rebellion in London and P&J member Margaret Ferguson Burns was arrested in the XR Peace protest at the Supreme Court. *Check out Brian's Reflection p.19.*



Image: Margaret Ferguson Burns and Brian Larkin with Jane Tallents protesting at Supreme Court. Image: XR Scotland.

Get Involved: Peace & Justice Volunteer Opportunities:

Volunteers needed: Photographer – Videographer - Graphic Artist - Fundraising - Stalls - Events Organiser – P&J News Editor

Internships and student work placement opportunities:

Origami Cranes Exhibition Curator - CO Memorial Researcher Bloggers & Writers; Social Media Person - Policy Researcher.

Other Projects: *We are open to ideas and can support projects in the areas of sustainability, peacebuilding, conflict resolution, nonviolence, human rights and refugee issues. If you have an idea, get in touch.*

Trustees Needed! We're looking to fill 3 or 4 positions on our Board including that of Treasurer. The roles require a commitment to attend 6 meetings per year, and to participate in an area of work such as the Fundraising or Finance committees. Contact the office if you want to learn more about what's involved. Especially needed are people with skills in fundraising and finance.

**Upcoming Events**

Origami Cranes Workshops
2nd Saturday of each month.
2-4pm. P&J Centre.

We just need to make about 5,000 more Cranes. Can you help? Come along to a workshop or make cranes at home.

Library and Open Hours. Our library includes hundreds of books on nonviolence, peacebuilding, conflict resolution and disarmament. Open Wednesdays 2:30 – 4:30pm and by appointment.

Low Cost Hot Desk & Part time Desk Rentals & Meeting Space.

Contact admin@peaceandjustice.org.uk for more info or to book.

Hong Kong: Five Demands, Not One Less

By Elena Deamant

In the streets of Hong Kong, protesters are engaged in a do-or-die upheaval to keep hold of their freedom while under a cover of tear gas. What began as opposition to a proposed extradition bill has grown into demonstrations against police brutality and authoritarian Chinese rule, with the fate of the semi-autonomous territory in the balance.

The instigating extradition bill, now dead, would have allowed suspects of certain crimes to be extradited to China for trial. Hong Kong, previously a British colony but handed back to China in 1997, has maintained limited autonomy under the principle “one country, two systems.” Fears of human rights violations in the Chinese legal system as well as political abuses of extradition¹ brought hundreds of thousands of citizens into the streets in support of continued independence for Hong Kong. Since June, protests have continuously disrupted the city.



Image: Protests in June against the extradition bill.

Peter Chuang, 2019

unsplash.com/photos/LWziaghLiiA

The protesters are calling for five key demands: withdrawal of the extradition bill (the only concession that Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam has said she will make), an independent inquiry into police misconduct, not referring to protesters with the word “riot,” releasing and dropping charges for arrested protesters, and universal

suffrage.² They will accept “not one less,” as the popular protest chant goes. The fulfillment of these requests would go a long way in protecting Hong Kong’s autonomous democracy. The people of Hong Kong are willing to take to the streets, to disrupt their education and their livelihoods to press for these demands.

With university campuses turned into battlegrounds and police firing live ammunition, the situation is escalating. The Beijing-backed police justify their

use of guns by pointing to the fact that a minority of protesters have used explosives and bricks³ while those protesters say their methods are necessary in order to put real pressure on the government. One student from Polytechnic University said, “We tried peaceful protests, but the government didn’t listen”.⁴ Even with the majority of protesters remaining peaceful, four of their demands remain unmet and protests have been met with excessive force by Hong Kong police.

More than 2,300 people have been arrested since the civil disobedience began and China’s response to the protests threatens to become even more severe in the coming months. Through its censorship and propaganda systems, China is controlling the narrative of the protests, not just within China but also in Hong Kong and internationally.⁵ Given this, the push by protesters to protect their rights of free speech and association is all the more important. The movement of thousands of Chinese troops into Hong Kong has increased the likelihood that protests will be met with military resistance.⁶ President Xi warned that any dissenters seeking to split from China “will perish, with their bodies smashed and bones ground to powder”.⁷ In the face of such strong words, we cannot stand idly by.

The events in Hong Kong have major implications for the international community. In an open letter to the people of the UK, the organization Stand With Hong Kong asks the government to uphold the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, a treaty

between the UK and China which assures autonomy and protection of freedom for Hong Kong. As seen by breaches of justice and increased surveillance, the rights of the people of Hong Kong are being denied. As a signatory of the declaration the UK has an obligation to stand with the people of Hong Kong in addressing this.⁸

The United States, as a supporter of democracy and human rights, has a similar obligation to defend freedom in Hong Kong. In a rare act of

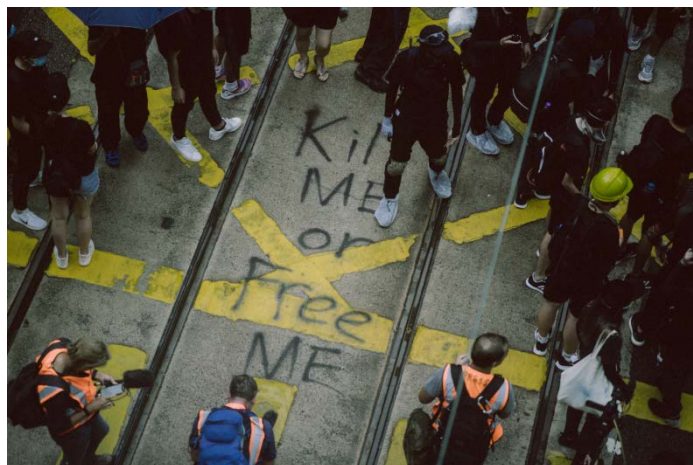


Image: ‘Kill Me or Free Me’. Joseph Chan, 2019, unsplash.com/photos/2wU5t-PO5HY

bipartisanship, both the House and Senate passed legislation in November in response to the protests.⁹ The bill, known as the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, mandates an annual review of Hong Kong's political autonomy for its favorable trade status and would allow sanctions on China and Hong Kong officials in light of any human rights abuses. This provides a measure of hope for the protesters, who are outmatched by the police and the Chinese army.

The threat to democracy in Hong Kong is pressing, and the autonomy of the city should be maintained with international support. Fundamental rights and freedoms are at stake.

Gender Equality in Nepal

By Federico Marchioli

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, provides a series of shared goals for guaranteeing basic rights, peace and prosperity globally. Sustainable Development Goal 5 is about gender equality and girls' empowerment. It aims to guarantee equal treatment and opportunities regardless of gender. Women and girls represent half the world's population and gender equality, apart from being a fundamental human right, is essential to achieve peaceful and prosperous societies which benefit from our full human potential.



Women's March 2017. Pennsylvania Ave. Vlad- Tchompalov. Unsplash.

Despite the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979 and the global rise of feminism which significantly contributed to the progress of gender equality over the last decades, there is

still a long way to go in order to achieve full equality of rights and opportunities for women. Despite the fact that the rights of all people, are already protected

by Art. 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states: “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex ... or other status” the UN felt the need of setting an individual goal for gender equality – underlining the complexity of affirming equal opportunities.

Gender disparity is prevalent in Nepal and, as in many countries, is rooted in local customs, and traditions. Although the country is modernising and gender roles are changing, the traditionally patriarchal society creates systematic barriers to gender equality. According to the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2018 Global Gender Gap Report, Nepal scores 0.671



Image: Joshua Watson. Humanitarian missions with Project Doxa. Kathmandu, Nepal. Unsplash.

(0.00 = disparity; 1.00 = parity), ranking 105th out of 149 countries. The report takes into consideration factors such as economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health, survival, and political empowerment. Even though women are as qualified as men, only 19% of them are legislators/senior officials/managers, and only 30% are professional and technical workers. Furthermore, only 33% of Parliamentarians are women, whilst in ministerial positions only 4% are women. This means that decision making power is owned by men who implement policies which reinforce the patriarchal societal model, negatively affecting the role of women within society.

Sadly, the gap between men and women is not limited to the economic and political levels, but it also affects the domestic environment, where again the man controls every decision. Women's autonomy is limited by their ethnicity, rural classification, education etc. For example, health expenditures are generally in the hands of the husband, so that women might hesitate to take care of certain health issues. Then the social perception that men are stronger than women lays the foundation for gender disparity and, in some cases, gender based violence. Women's autonomy is limited by their ethnicity, rural classification, education etc. Furthermore, boys inherit family possessions, whilst married daughters are not even considered as part of the family when

defining co-heirs. This happens often, and in young age, because of forced early marriages. Women living in rural areas take care of the household, cook, walk miles to collect water and work in the crops, and yet are marginalised from the rest of the community during their menstrual period.

Chhaupadi is a form of taboo which prohibits women and girls from participating in family activities while menstruating, as they are considered impure. Chhaupadi is mainly practiced in western Nepal. During this time women remain isolated in a menstruation hut made of wood or stone. They may not touch family members, especially male family members. Food and water are passed to them in such a way as to prevent touching. Menstruating women are also restricted from participating in family, religious or social



Image: Duty and Granddaughter. Aalok Atreya. Unsplash.

functions, and girls are prevented from going to school. Women who are menstruating may not consume milk, yogurt, butter and meat for fear that their impurity will cause cows to become ill. The typical diet during menstruation includes dry foods, salt, and rice. Menstruating women are also barred from using community water sources, bathing or washing clothes.

Despite this social isolation women must still work in the fields. Despite the new President being a woman (Mrs. Bidhya Devi Bhandari) who is trying to implement more equal laws, there remain major disparities between men and women. Girls and young women face numerous challenges ranging from the ill effects of early marriage to psychological and sexual violence, and fewer opportunities in the workspace to superstitions and societal traditions that place women on a lower rung.

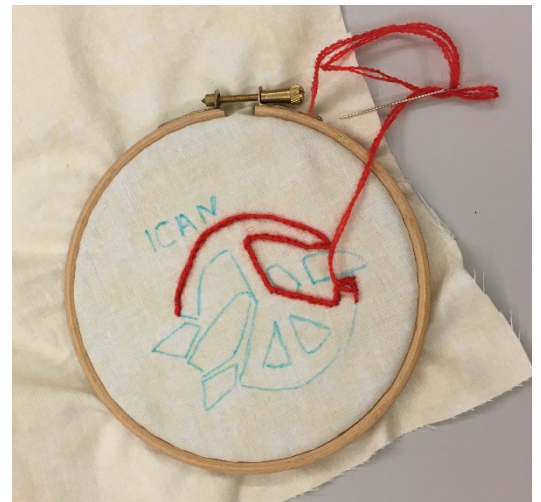
This gap can only be filled by higher female representation in public institutions – making them part of decision making process, educating them about gender equality, introducing empowerment programmes in urban and rural areas, giving women a stronger and louder voice and enabling them more autonomy in household decision making. The patriarchal system is responsible for

gender inequality, and change is going to take years. Nevertheless, we should be optimistic that peoples' efforts towards gender equality will bring about positive change and ultimately full equality of rights and opportunities between men and women.

Nuclear Ban Treaty – Why the opposition?

By Anna Karisto

On July 7th, 2017, a historical decision was made when the first comprehensive Nuclear Ban Treaty was adopted by 122 States. The TPNW opened for ratifications on September 20th, 2017. At the time of writing, the treaty has been signed by 80 States and ratified by 34. It will enter into force 90 days after the ratification of the 50th States and is therefore not in force yet. The biggest opposition for TPNW has come from NATO countries and other allies of the United States. Why is the treaty opposed?



Nuclear Deterrence

According to the so called deterrence doctrine, the possession of nuclear weapons serves to deter other states from attacking with like forces and hence, these weapons contribute to the maintenance of peace. This thinking has been prevalent during the past decades. After the Cold War and the dismantling of the bipolar world order, however, the deterrence doctrine has been questioned and a humanitarian perspective on nuclear weapons has gained popularity. When entering into force, the TPNW will make the deterrence doctrine illegal for the states that sign it.

Statements by those who oppose the TPNW have shown, however, that the United States and its allies still find the deterrence doctrine relevant. 29 States have stated that the US nuclear weapons are essential for their national security. Furthermore, France, the United Kingdom and the United States have expressed their fear about the TPNW disarming Western nuclear weapon states while letting the other nuclear weapon states keep their weapons.

Wrong States?

In addition to deterrence, the Nuclear Ban Treaty challenges the current unequal nuclear order. This order is dominated by the traditional nuclear States (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and the United States), which are also the permanent members of the UN Security Council. These States are recognised in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as Nuclear Weapons States (NWS).

The nuclear order established by the NPT has been criticised as unjust and discriminatory, as it establishes States which possess and those which do not have nuclear weapons and thus, reinforces a hierarchy of power. In contrast, the TPNW denounces the right of any state to possess nuclear weapons. The treaty challenges the prevailing nuclear order and has empowered states that do not possess nuclear weapons. It has been argued that while the NPT reflects the dominance of Russia and the United States, the TPNW represents the view of most States in the twenty-first century multi-polar world.



Those who oppose the treaty have emphasized the importance of the involvement of nuclear weapon states in nuclear disarmament, and argued that the treaty is not going to be effective without this involvement. Although the

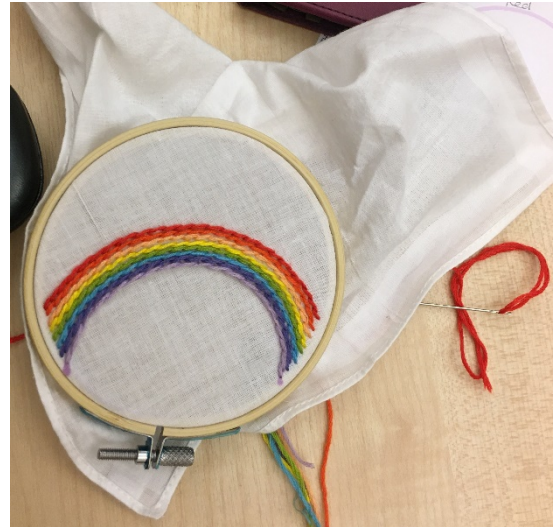
states supporting the treaty represent the majority of the states in the world, they are in this view, irrelevant in the matter.

Furthermore, the interests of the nuclear weapon states seem to have a direct impact on how the treaty is considered by other States. Before the launch of the ban treaty negotiations was voted upon, the US asked the NATO member states to vote against the negotiations and stay out of them, in case they would start. The member states did, in fact, not join the negotiations, except for the Netherlands, which was also the only State to eventually vote against the adoption of the treaty. It has also been suggested that certain states that are not members of NATO, such as Sweden and Switzerland, will not sign the treaty because of pressure they receive from the United States. However,

multiple NATO member states are, in fact, balancing the wishes of their own societies against NATO with regards to the ban treaty.

Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

One of the arguments against the TPNW is that it somehow weakens the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which entered into force in 1970 and has been ratified by 191 States. Within the framework of the NPT, States that do not possess nuclear weapons have committed to not acquiring them. The NPT also sets certain safeguard measures to its members. Opponents the



ban treaty argue that the treaty would enable States to pick and choose between the obligations in these two treaties and hence somehow avoid the safeguard measures of the NPT.

The NPT, however, also sets an obligation for the nuclear states to engage in efforts towards comprehensive nuclear disarmament. Most of the states party to the NPT have, in fact, announced that they support a comprehensive nuclear disarmament. Proponents of the TPNW have argued that there is a gap in NPT, as it has not set a deadline for this comprehensive nuclear disarmament. This has led to impatience among the states that do not have nuclear weapons, which was manifested especially in the NPT Review Conferences. The humanitarian initiative behind the ban treaty, in fact, emerged from the failure of the Review Conference in 2005.

Conclusion

The Nuclear ban treaty is a twenty-first century statement that has empowered states that do not have nuclear weapons to demand disarmament. The opposition to the treaty, however, holds on to a Cold War view dominated by the deterrence doctrine and the unequal world order controlled by the nuclear weapon States. The ban treaty, however, offers the societies a reason to focus more closely on nuclear weapons and to pressure their governments. What will follow from the ban treaty in the long run remains to be seen.

News from the Movements



XR Peace had 53 arrests during the two weeks of Extinction Rebellion arising from a series of dynamic nonviolent direct actions that were aimed at making the links between war, militarism and the climate crisis. The actions were outside the MoD, at BAE Systems and outside the Supreme Court. The Court action was in defiance of a Section 14

Order prohibiting protests. The arrests, were later ruled unlawful.

NO TO NATO! Yes to Peace!

We joined friends from Edinburgh Stop the War, Edinburgh CND and Women in Black for a NO TO NATO Vigil in Edinburgh in December.



Reflection: London Plane Tree

Brian Larkin is a Coordinator for XR Peace, the coalition of peace groups that aims to address the links between war, militarism and the climate crisis. He was arrested blocking the entrance to BAE Systems, on the steps of the MOD and at the Supreme Court after police banned XR protests in London.

One day in October four of us, all grandparents blocked the road around Trafalgar Square as part of Extinction Rebellion. Here's why I was there.

I am a seasoned activist. But I initially held back on getting involved with Extinction Rebellion, doubting whether the demands – net zero by 2025, a Citizens Assembly – were achievable, and the seemingly alarmist rhetoric from parts of XR, that we were all going to die.

I'd read the IPCC report that said we had twelve years to avert the worst consequences of greenhouse gas emissions. I'd read about the ice caps and permafrost melting. I was aware of the increasing extinction of species.

But I felt I was doing what I could. I tried to live simply, recycling, growing a lot of our own food, becoming the change. And there were lots of people campaigning about the climate crisis. My focus was on peace and disarmament, and there aren't enough people working on that these days. Then, another study. Birds across N America have declined in numbers, 65% since 1970. I was ten years old in 1970, about the age my grandson is now. In my yard there was a big plane tree. I used to climb to the top of that tree and look out across the Delaware River valley. You could see for miles.

One day I was raking leaves when a flock of starlings flew overhead. The noise of their chatter and rustle of wingbeats filled the air. They filled the sky, as far as you could see. They went on and on. It seemed like forever. I was in the presence of something far greater than myself, the earth, life itself.



When I read that report about the loss of half the birds in N America I was back there looking up at that flock of starlings and knew, I had to join a movement, no matter how imperfect, to resist this destruction. And as I lay in the road, looking up at that London plane tree, I again remembered those birds. If my grandson climbed that tree only one third of those starlings would fly over. How many birds will there be when his grandson is ten?

The school strikers are right. We've failed them. We knew this was happening. We knew about the greenhouse effect in the 80's. We knew in the 90s that rainforest was being destroyed to produce beef for US fast food chains. I knew it. When I worked briefly for Greenpeace I used to put on the voice of Dr Seuss's Lorax saying "I speak for the trees, and we're saying stop cutting down the rainforest."

Gandhi said we must become the change we want to see.

Personal change has to be part of the solution. We need to drastically reduce consumption. Less meat, fewer new clothes, fewer cars, fewer flights. But, with the ice caps melting, with permanent drought in the southern hemisphere, with coral reefs dying personal change will not turn this around fast enough.

Governments must act quickly. But they're not going to do that unless we force them.

During the Cold War many of us believed humanity was on the brink of nuclear war. Armageddon could happen any time. I thought of this as “Geocide”. With that sense of urgency I took part in many resistance actions, did time in jail. Nuclear weapons remain the twin existential threat to humanity and the planet. If only a handful are used it will cause nuclear winter, famine and the death of billions of people.



But my daughter recently helped me to see that geocide is already happening. The collective impact of human activity is already, and at an ever increasing pace, destroying life on earth. Like a juggernaut, we move with certainty

towards destruction. And there is no sign of turning this around.

According to the 2019 Emissions Gap Report “to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C, emissions must drop to 25 gigatons by 2030. Based on today’s commitments, emissions are on track to reach 56 Gt CO₂e by 2030, over twice what they should be”. At COP 2020 in



Image: Boy on XR march in London October Rebellion with quote from Dr Seuss’s The Lorax.

Glasgow governments must make commitments to cut emissions by 7.6%

emissions every year we CAN limit global warming to 1.5°C. As the host nation the UK government has the opportunity to lead on this. We need to push the government to do that this year.

We must all be the Lorax. We must speak for the trees and the birds, for the people of the global south who are at the sharp end of the climate crisis, for the species that are dying, for future generations, and for the earth itself. We must demand government act now to end greenhouse gas emissions by 2025. The great grandchildren are already asking: “what did you do about the climate emergency in the 2020’s?”