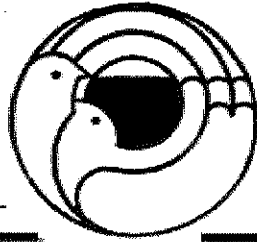


June
2021

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Newsletter of **LEPOCO**
Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

How Can We Stand for Peace?

Only days before rockets and missiles flew again between Israel and Gaza, the dependable analyst on Palestine-Israel issues, Phyllis Bennis, wrote an article about why the Human Rights Watch report, "A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution," is a "very big deal" (CommonDreams.org, 5/5/21). She noted that the HRW report added to the January report from the Israeli human rights organization, B'tselem, titled, "A Regime of Jewish Supremacy from the River to the Sea: This Is Apartheid." Phyllis Bennis said those reports reflect "the power of decades of work in defense of Palestinian rights." That work, she wrote, has not been easy, nor will the work needed in the future, be easy.

Thankfully, these reports were not lost in the horrific violence and terror that gripped Gaza and Israel in mid-May. The apartheid designation based on Israeli violations of the International Covenant Against the Crime of Apartheid, became part of the broader discussion around the conflict. The signs at the May 16th Allentown rally to end the attack on Gaza carried the anti-apartheid message locally.

The violence of the 11-day war, of course, brought the greatest suffering by many degrees of magnitude to the people of Gaza, but also to the people of Israel. The suffering was most starkly and heart-breakingly presented in the May 27th cover story in "Haaretz," an Israeli center-left newspaper. The headline, "This is the price of war," accompanied photos of 67 children killed in Gaza during the bombardment. There are obviously too many reports of destruction to share here – about essential infrastructure destroyed, health care facilities bombed, leading doctors killed, news organization attacked, to report here. But, the news that 11 of the 67 children killed in Gaza were participants in a Norwegian Refugee Council psycho-social program that aimed to help them deal with trauma, needs to be shared.

The failures of the Biden Administration during the May war were on display every day – no expressed sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians, a dogged reluctance to call for a ceasefire as the bombs we provided were hitting civilian targets, and the blocking of several UN Security Council pleas for a statement condemning the violence.

Twenty-nine members of the Senate Democratic caucus did issue a statement, led by Sen. Jon Ossoff (D-GA) on May 16, calling for an immediate ceasefire "to prevent any further loss of civilian life and to prevent further escalation of conflict in Israel and the Pales-

tinian Territories." On May 24, 500 former staffers of President Biden's 2020 campaign issued a letter calling on the president to hold Israel "accountable for its actions," in the bombardment of Gaza and to "lay the groundwork for justice and lasting peace." And we all remember the May 18 photo of Rep. Rashida Tlaib, of Michigan, as she greeted Pres. Biden on the airport tarmac in Detroit with the message, "Palestinian human rights are not a bargaining chip and must be protected," (continued on page 4)

Tax Day Presence Held on Hot Day in May

Under "normal" circumstances, for Tax Day, LEPOCO organizes to leaflet at many of the post offices in the Lehigh Valley. The flyer we typically share is produced by the War Resister's League (WRL), and it tells how much of the U.S. discretionary funds – fed by our taxes – are dedicated to the Pentagon and military programs.

In an effort to continue to be COVID cautious, but also to be able to share this information for Tax Day, the Steering Committee and the Stop the Wars Committee agreed that we would include the WRL flyer in the April LEPOCO Newsletter, but also leaflet in person, in Bethlehem, with our own flyer which shares similar information. On Saturday, May 15, a small group gathered to leaflet at the corner of Broad & Main, Bethlehem, holding banners that read "Money for Healthcare and Education, Not Empire and Militarism," "Cut Military Spending, Our Lives Depend On It," and "Honk for Peace." The pedestrian traffic was minimal, but our presence elicited many honks, thumbs-ups, and peace signs, from cars in the steady traffic stream at that intersection. Many passersby were willing to take and read the flyer and some were interested in having a conversation with us – whether or not they agreed with what we were sharing.

The content of the flyer includes a chart which compares the U.S. military spending budget, to the military budgets of the next 11 highest spending countries. With a budget of \$778 BILLION, we outspend those 11 countries, *combined*, by the painfully large margin of \$17 billion. We outspend the remaining 138 countries by a whopping \$336 billion.

As the flyer asks of us – for the sake of the environment, U.S. economic disparities, and for the sake of a more peaceful world, let's tell Pres. Biden and Congress, not to spend more of our tax dollars on the military and to please cut military spending by at least 10%!

- Amanda Zaniesienko

George Floyd Poster presented to LEPOCO along with Book on Civil Rights for Peace Camp Library

A poster portrait of George Floyd with a tattered US flag behind him and large lettering, "PLEASE! I CAN'T BREATHE" was presented to LEPOCO, April 16, by graphic design artist Johnny Wilk of Whitehall, accompanied by his friend Dean Young, Director of the Boys and Girls Club of Easton.

Dozens of George Floyd posters were distributed to Easton schools by the Boys and Girls Club of Easton, intended to spark tough conversations about racism, equity and police brutality, according to Dean Young, as reported in *The Express-Times*. Some parents objected that the posters were inappropriate for student discussion due to the often overwhelming challenges of COVID pandemic this past year.

Superintendent David Piperato declared early on that Easton was an anti-racist school district, and urged the tough conversations to continue. Many teachers agreed. At the Easton School Board meeting April 20, English teacher and Easton Area Education Association President Kevin Deely, wearing a t-shirt saying, "MAKE HATE FADE," that was also designed by Johnny Wilk, praised the Board and the Superintendent for taking a strong stand against racism. Deely stressed the importance of having conversations with students to vent the current crisis of our divisive society. Deely said the phrase, "I can't breathe," expresses the pressures of COVID and also the homelessness and the discrimination and the mental illness that some students experience.

Superintendent Piperato held a meeting with the full police force to discuss the George Floyd poster and to promote positive relations between police and the community. Easton School District's Diversity Alliance presented a program that featured Ron Rabinovitz discussing his friendship with Jackie Robinson and his civil rights activism. Dean Young presented LEPOCO with a copy of Ron Rabinovitz's book, *Always, Jackie: The True Story of a Boy and His Baseball Hero*, which will be useful to Peace Camp.

— Monica McAgnon

LEPOCO Delegation Joins "Say Their Names" Event In Bethlehem

On May 2nd, thirteen members of LEPOCO attended the "Say Their Names" event held by Lehigh Valley Stands Up. The event memorialized the lives of Christian Hall from the Poconos, Joey Santos from Whitehall, and Stephen Hughes of Berks County. These three local men were all killed by law enforcement in times of personal crisis.

Participants lined up to lay carnations by photos of the three men, which were located under a statue at

Bethlehem's Payrow Plaza. Members of Lehigh Valley Stands Up spoke of the men, and then they invited local candidates for the May primary election to speak including Ce-Ce Gerlach, Justan Parker Fields, Zachary Cole-Borghi and Taiba Sultana. These politicians, who received endorsements from Lehigh Valley Stands Up, spoke of their visions for safer communities with less law enforcement presence and more funding for other community supports. Sarah Pammer of the Lehigh Valley Period Project shared information about her work to collect free menstrual products for people in need in the Lehigh Valley.

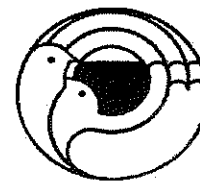
After the program, LEPOCO members got to circulate and speak with the candidates and other young activists. Participation in this event was part of an effort by LEPOCO's Steering Committee to become more active in racial justice issues.

— Mary Lang

Check out the LEPOCO website at www.lepoco.org for a Calendar of Events, Newsletter Archive, & More.

Sign up for LEPOCO e-mail weekly updates by calling 610-691-8730, or by writing to lepoco@fast.net.

Follow LEPOCO on Facebook and Twitter. Please "like" and "share," often.



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The LEPOCO Newsletter is published eight times a year by the Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern, a nonviolent, non-profit organization dedicated to peace in all forms.

Annual dues are:

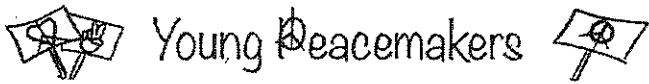
Regular Member	\$35
Limited Income Member	\$10
Household Membership	\$45
Supporting Member	\$75

Articles/news should be submitted to one of the addresses above for consideration for the next issue of the newsletter.

Newsletter Staff: Tom Stinnett, Nancy Tate, Amanda Zaniesienko, Carol Baylor, Janet Ney, Rick Dow, Jeff Vitelli.

Thanks to all the people who collate and prepare the newsletter for mailing each month.

LEPOCO Steering Committee: Diane Dilendik, Sharlee DiMenichi, Margot Hillman, Julius Iwantsch (co-treasurer), Nancy Johnston, Mary Lang, Monica McAgnon, Dan Miller, Janet Ney, Tom Pietrzak, Susie Ravitz, Tom Stinnett (co-treasurer), Nancy Tate (ex-officio), Jeff Vitelli, and Amanda Zaniesienko (ex-officio).



Calling Young Peacemakers for Peace Camp At Home!

What do porcupines and earthworms have to do with peace at Peace Camp at Home? Join the PCAH Zoom sessions during the week of July 26 to July 31, 2021, to find out.

Expect stories, discussions, games and songs. This year, campers can work in small groups on a variety of peace building activities.

For campers that might miss the Zoom meeting, leaders will record each day and share the event later. (No campers will be recorded.)

Each camper will get a packet that includes daily activities, crafts, things to think about, games and other fun stuff to do. Learn about the world and the living things who share our planet.

If you have aged out of Peace Camp, you can still join in the fun by becoming a Peace Camp volunteer.

Tell ALL your friends about Peace Camp at Home. The more peace builders we have in the world, the merrier the world will be!

To register for Peace Camp At Home, to volunteer, or to get more information, call 610-691-8730. Or send the registration form in this newsletter back to the LEPOCO office.

The suggested cost of Peace Camp At Home is \$5 for each camper, up to \$25 per family. Scholarships are available.

- Karen Maurer



Walking, Riding, & Acting for the Grandchildren and Our Earth

June 20-28, a hearty group of activists will travel from Scranton, Pennsylvania, to Wilmington, Delaware, - walking, riding, and witnessing for stronger federal climate action. They see their effort as part of a much larger campaign to challenge President Biden, to protest compromised local public officials and regulators, and to hold to account polluting corporations - they are seeking bold steps from all of them to stop climate change and promote environmental justice.

We all know the dire crisis we face. As this newsletter is being prepared data was reported that the atmospheric carbon dioxide level reached a monthly average of 419 parts per million in May - the highest level experienced by our planet in over four million years!

On Sunday, June 20, Walk participants will gather in Scranton (President Biden's birthplace) for an inter-faith prayer service and meetings with local activists.

The next day they will rally with local opponents of the Keystone Sanitary Landfill recently permitted to accept highly toxic fracking fluid waste.

On Tuesday, June 22, they will travel to Easton and learn about the impact the PennEast Pipeline would have, if built across the mountains and valleys of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. That night Nancy Johnston's yard will become a campsite for the walkers. As their journey continues through Bucks County they will walk some sections of the Delaware Canal Tow Path. They will stop at several locations to learn about the opposition to the Gibbstown liquefied natural gas export terminal and other fracked gas pipelines in the area, ending in Wilmington, Delaware (President Biden's home), after passing through Philadelphia. In Wilmington they will challenge fossil fuel investors like Chase Bank.

You can learn more about this important and unique walk at: <https://bit.ly/walk4ourgrandchildren>. There you can sign up to join the walkers on their eight-day journey or any part thereof. You can also find there information on how to make a donation to support this effort.

You can contact Nancy Johnston at sacredgrove4@gmail.com, to thank her for her generous support for the walkers, inviting them to camp on her lawn. You can also ask her how you can help her that day (Tuesday, June 22).

Finally, if you plan to walk for some of the local portion of the walk, please contact LEPOCO 610-691-8730, so we can coordinate logistics - rides, etc.

- Nancy Johnston & Nancy Tate

A Memorial Day Response from Veterans for Peace

We are tired of parades, memorials and pageantry. Take back your "thank you for your service" and 50% off sales.

We want people to live without threats of U.S. bullets and bombs.

We remember the enormous loss of civilian life that is forgotten in today's memorials and hidden from view in the U.S. consciousness. America has no space on its calendar to memorialize these victims.

We grieve the loss of friends and the death of veterans unable to forget the tragedies and forgive themselves.

We are ANGRY that there is a holiday that glorifies nationalism and patriotism and ignores the trauma that U.S. militarism enacts all over the globe.

We are filled with rage as we continue to watch the empty political platitudes from the two largest political parties praising soldiers and veterans as they continue to send them off to wars that line the pockets of the rich.

We are frustrated that mainstream media and popular culture glorifies U.S. militarism.

We are exhausted from nightmares of our participation and the images of ongoing trauma from a system of violence we once propped up. We live with the wounds of our moral injuries, scabs that we can't let heal for fear we'd recreate the injury.

On Memorial Day we don't want to remember and we are afraid we will forget.

All we know for sure is...Fuck War.

How Can We Stand for Peace?

(continued from page 1)

not negotiated." Rep. Tlaib is the first woman of Palestinian descent to serve in the U.S. Congress

Where do we find the hope and the will to do the hard work Phyllis Bennis describes as we witness this decades-long conflict? We can look to those - the thousands - who have struggled and are struggling nonviolently and persistently to protect homes and find a peaceful future for Palestine-Israel.

The Parents Circle Families Forum is a joint Israeli-Palestinian organization of over 600 families, all of whom have lost an immediate family member to the conflict. They oppose the occupation, and believe an end to the conflict is possible. They work for reconciliation and choose peace over violence and war.

The Combatants for Peace is a group of Palestinians and Israelis who have taken an active part in the cycle of violence, either as Israeli soldiers in the IDF or as Palestinians fighting to free Palestine from Israeli occupation. They work to build communities of Palestinians and Israelis acting together to promote peace and to build social infrastructure to end the conflict and the occupation.

And there are many organizations working in the U.S. like Jewish Voice of Peace.

Many groups and writers have issued statements about what the U.S. could/should do now. Their suggestions include:

- The president could announce that Israeli settlements are illegal and that annexations by Israel are unacceptable as colonial expropriation.
- Biden could announce that regardless of how many states there are, U.S. policy towards Israel and towards the Palestinians from now on will be based on human rights and equality for all.
- The Administration could call for an immediate end to the Israeli closure and blockade of Gaza.
- The U.S. should publicly reiterate a policy opposing Israel's demolition of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem and state that East Jerusalem is Occupied Territory under international law.
- The UN should hold Israel accountable through sanctions. The hundreds of UN resolutions that have been adopted over the decades regarding Israel-Palestine have been nonbinding. The UN could adopt the active nonviolent measure of sanctions as they did to help end apartheid in South Africa.

(These suggestions are among those given by Phyllis Bennis of the Institute for Policy Studies, the National Lawyers Guild, Joseph Gerson of the Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation-USA.)

What We Can Do Now:

Immediately we can urge our elected representatives to support HR-2590, the Defending Human Rights of Palestinian Children & Families Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act, introduced by Rep. Betty McCollum of Minnesota, in April. If adopted, the

legislation would bar Israel from using U.S. funds for the military detention of Palestinian children, demolition and seizure of Palestinian homes, and further land annexation. None of our local representatives are among the 27 co-sponsors of this legislation.

We also need to oppose all the requests for more military aid to Israel. The State Department was approving more military aid to Israel (\$735 million) even as the bombs were flying and even as some in Congress were working to oppose this aid. (The war profiteers in the U.S. expect to benefit from this war. They assume U.S. taxpayers will pay to replace the weapons lost by Israel in the war. War profiteers in Israel were demonstrating their weapons for future export - those exports were worth \$72 billion in 2019.)

Besides the authors mentioned here already, there are some other sources of information worth our attention. DemocracyNow.org conducted numerous interviews on their daily program in May with international human rights leaders in Israel-Palestine. Chris Hedges wrote an excellent piece from the depths of his reporting experience in Israel, published by www.CommonDreams.org on May 14. One experienced traveler to Israel-Palestine recommends Green Olive Tours that leads online and in-person tours of Israel-Palestine (www.greenolivetours.com).

- Nancy Tate

Bits & Pieces

☪ The Witness for Peace Solidarity Collective has announced several delegations that are part of their effort to build "transnational solidarity to resist U.S. government and corporate policies that contribute to violence, poverty, and oppression in the Americas."

In August a delegation to Honduras will look at "The U.S. Role in Migration." In December a delegation to Colombia will study "Food Sovereignty, Sustainable Farming and the Resistance Against Corporate Land Control." There will be six delegations to Cuba before the end of 2021, including one in December that looks at lessons learned about "Investing in Humanity, Towards a World Without Military Bases, Policing, or War."

All participants in delegations will be required to be vaccinated before departure and pandemic conditions will be closely monitored based on access to vaccines, safety of airports, and on the ground.

You can learn more at www.solidaritycollective.org.

☪ Lindsay Koshgarian of National Priorities Project reports that the Biden Administration is not only preserving "the massive Pentagon spending hikes of the Trump era," but expanding them "to \$753 billion, up from the already staggering \$740 billion from the last fiscal year." She reminds us that around "half of all military spending goes not to the troops or their families or to any critical safety need, but to military contracting corporations with millionaire CEOs." The Biden budget proposal would perpetuate and expand the nuclear weapons threat into a new century with a new ballistic missile program. For more information see www.prioritiesproject.org.

The Struggle Shared

"If you have a model...where you need wars in order to make money, I think there's something fundamentally wrong with the company and you ought to have some more moral reflection about how you earn your billions of dollars."

- Medea Benjamin, CODEPINK, addressing Phebe Novakovic, CEO of General Dynamics, at the company's Annual Meeting in May, 2021.

DRONE WHISTLEBLOWER IN JAIL: Daniel Hale, a former Air Force intelligence analyst who pleaded guilty in March 2021 to sharing classified documents about drone strikes with a reporter, has been arrested and incarcerated ahead of his sentencing scheduled in July.

According to his 2019 indictment, Hale enlisted in the Air Force in 2009, and was assigned to the National Security Agency, was deployed to Afghanistan in 2012, with the DoD's Joint Special Operations Task Force, responsible for "identifying, tracking and targeting" high value terror suspects. He has admitted to leaking eleven classified documents to a reporter, eventually used in an eight-part series published by "The Intercept," which raised questions about the accuracy of strikes, targeting procedures, and the expansion of the special operations footprint in Africa. After the articles ran, the Obama administration committed to further transparency for the drone program, including releasing an estimate of the number of non-combatants killed outside war zones. Civil liberties groups at the time praised it as a step forward.

"These documents detailed a secret, unaccountable process for targeting and killing people around the world, including U.S. citizens, through drone strikes," said Betsy Reed, The Intercept's Editor in Chief at the time of Hale's indictment. "They are of vital public importance, and activity related to their disclosure is protected by the First Amendment... No one has ever been held accountable for killing civilians in drone strikes."

Hale pleaded guilty to a single charge under the 1917 Espionage Act, and faces up to 10 years in prison. Although his sentencing was

not scheduled until July, a federal judge ordered him incarcerated until then for violating terms of his pre-trial release. His lawyers argue that there are no actual violations as alleged by the prosecution. His surprise arrest averted plans for farewell activities that friends and supporters had planned, and Hale didn't even have time to arrange for someone to care for his cat.

Jesselyn Radack is the attorney representing Daniel Hale on whistleblower issues. She also represents Edward Snowden, Julian Assange, and other notable whistleblowers and heads the Whistleblower & Source Protection Program (WHISPeR) at ExposeFacts.

To learn more about Daniel Hale and what you can do to support him, see www.standwithdanielhale.org.

ACLU MOBILE JUSTICE APP...: With the reports of new incidents of police abuse happening with mounting frequency, with the increasing calls for police accountability, with police withholding crucial evidence like body cam footage, and with the dramatic testimony at the Derek Chauvin Trial, it has become abundantly clear that independent recording and reporting of these incidents by ordinary citizen witnesses is often instrumental in ensuring timely and accurate factual information, and accountability.

The Pennsylvania ACLU has developed an App, MobileJusticePA, which can be downloaded on your smartphone, and at the touch of the icon, you can record and report an incident if you are a witness to one. The ACLU has a team of attorneys who monitor information as it comes in and respond accordingly.

You can test the app, to ensure that it is operating correctly, and

ready to use in an emergency. It includes a summary of your rights, including what sorts of recordings are and are not legal and admissible. (Pennsylvania wiretap law makes it illegal to record private conversations in public places without the consent of all participants, but recording police performing their official duties in public is an exception, and audio taping an investigation, an interrogation, and an arrest is permissible.)

So download the Mobile Justice App to your phone, so you'll be prepared if you are ever witness to an incident which may require some police accountability.

NYC BANS ROUNDUP IN PARKS: LEPOCO members who attended our Annual Dinner in 2010 will remember the flamboyant speaker, Reverend Billy, from The Church of Stop Shopping. Since 2014, Rev. Billy and the Stop Shopping Choir have been working with the Black Institute and a national coalition of activists opposing Monsanto's marketing of glyphosate (Roundup) responsible for decimating the populations of bees, butterflies, and other pollinators, and linked to cancer in humans. After seven years of organizing, New York City Council voted unanimously on Earth Day, April 22, to ban the use of chemical pesticides, particularly glyphosate, on city property. Over the course of the campaign, Rev. Billy and the Choir held countless actions, rallies, shows, visited Monsanto on multiple occasions, went to the UK, were arrested, and escaped being arrested.

The New York State Legislature had passed SB-6502 which bans glyphosate from use on public lands in July of 2020, according to Beyond Pesticides. With Governor Cuomo's signature it is set to become law on December 31, 2021. The hope is that these successes can translate into a tsunami of similar legislation across the country until all our communities are protected from such harmful pesticides. Are you ready to call on your city council to ban glyphosate?

- Jeff Vitelli



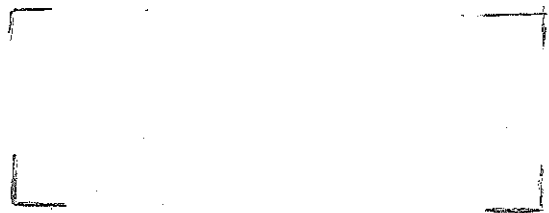
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See Inside:

Page 1

- ◊ Standing for Peace?
- ◊ Tax Day Presence

Page 2

- ◊ PCAH Calls Young Peacemakers
- ◊ Walking...for Our Earth
- ◊ Veterans for Peace on Remembering

Page 3

- ◊ George Floyd Poster
- ◊ "Say Their Names"

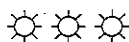
Page 4

- ◊ Page 1 continued & tiny Bits & Pieces

Page 5

- ◊ The Struggle Shared

Extra: Peace Camp At Home Registration Form



Monthly Peace Vigil

(Second Thursdays)

July 8 & August 12

4:30-5:30 pm

The wars & preparations for war continue. Help witness for peace.

3rd & Wyandotte Sts., Bethlehem

LEPOCO, 610-691-8730, for more info.

Peace Camp At Home Returns!

July 26-30, 2021

Registration form enclosed!

Now is the time to sign up.

See page 3 & contact LEPOCO 610-691-8730 for more info.

MEETINGS...MEETINGS...MEETINGS...MEETINGS...MEETINGS...

Thursday, June 17, 2 pm: Stop the Wars Committee Meeting, at LEPOCO (for those who have been vaccinated).

Tuesday, June 29, 1 pm: Peace Camp At Home 2021 Planning Committee Meeting, by zoom. Call 610-691-8730 or email lepoco@fast.net to get the link to participate.

Tuesday, July 6, 6 pm: First Tuesday LEPOCO Book Group will meet on a porch. Call 610-691-8730 or email lepoco@fast.net to get the directions.

Mondays, July 12 & August 9, 7 pm: LEPOCO Monthly Action Meeting, at LEPOCO Peace Center, 1705 W. Broad St., lower level, Bethlehem. Call 610-691-8730 or email lepoco@fast.net to learn about COVID restrictions/plans. All members & friends are welcome at this monthly business meeting where the organization's activities are discussed & planned. These meetings are on the second Monday of the month.