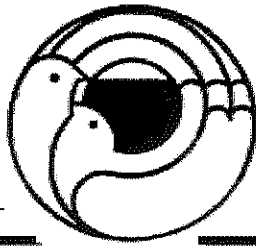


July-August  
2025  
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Newsletter of **LEPOCO**  
Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

## Death by Aid in Gaza

The latest cruel twist of U.S./Israel policy in the Gaza Strip has resulted in a situation for the Palestinians that beggars belief. In early March, Israel unilaterally withdrew from a ceasefire agreement and renewed its brutal military operations and total aid blockade. In late May, a bizarre new agency appeared, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), which began limited food distribution. The initiative for the GHF came from Israel, with input from both its foreign intelligence agency Mossad and the Israeli military, although the agency is a U.S. entity, a private corporation registered in Delaware and staffed by U.S. mercenaries. It embodies the intimate collaboration between Israel and the U.S. that has prevailed throughout the war. With good reason the respected medical aid organization Doctors Without Borders describes its operations as "slaughter masquerading as aid."

The "rationale" that Israel and the U.S. put forward for creating the GHF is that under the old system Hamas was looting aid trucks. The Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* has shown, rather, that some looting took place, not by Hamas but by criminal gangs operating with the support of the Israeli army.

The GHF violates the most basic principles of humanitarian relief operations. It lacks transparency: Its funding is opaque and the organization is shrouded in secrecy. The GHF's original CEO resigned because he couldn't go along with plans that violated humanitarian principles. The foundation, which has the full backing of Washington, is now run by Jonnie Moore, Jr., an evangelical Christian preacher, who has praised Trump's plan for the U.S. to take over Gaza. Its armed employees, masked and in battle gear, cannot be identified. The amount of food distributed is wholly inadequate to feed the population and is inappropriate to the culture of the recipients.

Rather than bringing aid to people — as was the case in the old, well-functioning system of U.N. agencies and other aid providers — the GHF requires starving Palestinians to go to the few distribution centers it has set up — thus it functions mainly as a mechanism for the continued displacement and ethnic cleansing of the Gaza Strip. Gaza's Palestinian population of over two million is now crowded into about a fifth of their occupied territory. Without irony, Netanyahu talks in Orwellian language of giving Palestinians the "freedom of choice" to leave Gaza if they wish.

When desperate people reach the GHF sites, they must enter long, fenced, cage-like corridors, in order to

access and egress the distribution points. AI facial recognition and biometric software is used to screen out supposed Hamas supporters. The armed U.S. contract workers are also protected by nearby Israeli soldiers supported by tanks. Both groups feel free to fire on people seeking aid if they feel endangered — or for no reason. Since late May, according to the UN, over eight hundred Palestinians have been murdered at GHF distribution hubs and many thousand wounded. Gaza medical facilities, already scarcely functioning, are overwhelmed by mass casualty events at distribution centers. The GHF denies any deaths or injuries at its hubs.

A GHF whistleblower reported that contractors frequently fire on whomever they wish and refer to the desperate aid-seekers as "zombie hoards." The video game reference is confirmed by the Palestinian writer Muhammad Shehadda, who said, "When the starvation gets too severe, it dulls your senses. It sort of shuts down your brain. An empty stomach means an empty mind. And your basic survival instinct forces you to walk, to march like a zombie towards these distribution centers, only to get shot on the way. The chances of survival are very slim. So, the overall picture is just a genocide." Many Palestinians simply call the GHF's distribution hubs death traps. According to Shehadda, "Israel [is] basically laying a mousetrap with fake cheese to Gazans to go to GHF distribution sites to only

(continued on page 2)

*Saturday, August 9, 3 pm*

80 Years After the Bombings of Hiroshima &  
Nagasaki We Will Gather

*To Help Build a Safer World*

Join us for  
Readings, Singing,  
& Reflection

At the

*Peace Pole*

Rose Garden Park  
8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Bethlehem

# The Imperial Boomerang

The imperial boomerang, first coined by Aimé Césaire in *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950), refers to weapons and tactics first used in overseas interventions returning to the center of empire to repress and oppress people here. This phenomenon has a long history in the US. One early example is counter-insurgency tactics used in the Philippine-American War were brought back to be used by law enforcement in the US, but this process continues today.

More recently, because of the so-called "War on Terror," US police acquired billions of dollars of surplus military equipment. Moreover, it's well-known that US police & ICE cooperate with and receive training from Israel, a major focal point of US imperialism. In fact, security at the US-Mexican border has adopted some of Israel's own brutal policies and uses Israeli consultants and technologies. Similarly, large police departments and ICE fly drones that were first used in Middle East wars. Recently, predator drones – which have killed thousands overseas – flew over the anti-ICE protests in Los Angeles.

While not as murderous as they are overseas, there is a connection between domestic "security" and international intervention. That connection is core to imperialism. Imperialism divides the world into the prosperous and the impoverished. Elements of what the US empire did to the Philippines, Guatemala, Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam, Iraq and so-on have come home. We will continue to see this process play out in US current interventions, including Palestine & Iran.

Recognizing this connection, we must stand against both imperialism abroad and the police state at home. If you, too, are concerned about ICE's activities in the Lehigh Valley, get involved in the Emergency Response Network, and if you see ICE activity call the Rapid Response hotline at 610-850-9930

- Joel Atkinson,  
L.V. Democratic Socialists of America

## Death by Aid in Gaza

(continued from page 1)

get shot." Despite knowing the risk, desperate families suffering famine continue to send out young boys and men to try to get food.

The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation openly reveals the depth of the complicity of the U.S. government in what is sometimes seen simply as an Israeli war. The GHF is also a kind of culmination. After the U.S. has given Israel unlimited access to its weaponry – to the profit of U.S. armament manufacturers – including intelligence and computer resources; after refusing to acknowledge Israel's war crimes and crimes against humanity, as well as ignoring the U.S.'s own laws about provisioning weapons to foreign states; and

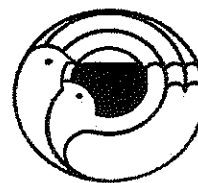
after providing Israel with diplomatic cover at the U.N. and political support here and abroad, a new stage has been reached. In the form of mercenary contractors, the U.S. now has boots on the ground and the U.S. and Israel have created a joint agency presaging what comes next – a re-colonized land, with continued genocide and ethnic cleansing, as a new Gaza begins to be born. Concerned LEPOCO members should join the weekly vigil on Thursday afternoons at the south end of the Hill-to-Hill bridge.

~ Mick Baylor

Editor's Note: A longer version of this article appeared in *The Morning Call* on July 29, "Gaza Strip aid agency is a lethal sham."

## Film: "The Encampments" to be Shown Locally

On Friday, September 5 at 6:30 pm, the important documentary film, *The Encampments*, will be shown at the Cathedral Church of the Nativity, 321 Wyandotte St., south Bethlehem. The showing is free of charge and is sponsored by the Lehigh Valley Palestine Coalition. (LEPOCO is one of the groups in the Palestine Coalition.) This film offers a compelling account of the campus encampments that took place across the U.S. in the spring of 2024 and the repression this movement for Palestinian rights suffered at the hands of university administrators and the police.



Newsletter of LEPOCO

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

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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.

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

LEPOCO Steering Committee: Kellyn Slingerland, Margot Hillman, Julius Iwantsch (co-treasurer), Monica McAghon, Martricia McLaughlin, Janet Ney, Susie Ravitz, Tom Stinnett (co-treasurer), Nancy Tate (ex-officio), and Amanda Zaniesienko.

## Bernard "Bernie" J. Berg: Presente

Longtime LEPOCO member and activist Bernie Berg died peacefully at home on June 4, 2025, aged 89. A man of unwavering conscience, he was known as a fierce advocate for truth, peace and justice.

A Pittsburgh native, Bernie lived in Easton with his wife Linda Laubach, who survives him, for over 50 years.

Bernie's life followed a remarkable path from geological engineering, the navy, the priesthood, community nursing, and finally, to decades of outspoken activism.

After graduating from the University of Pittsburgh with a BS in Geological Engineering in 1958, Bernie served as an ensign aboard the U.S.S. Rushmore (1958-61). He later said he was "keeping the sea lanes safe for United Fruit Co." In 1963, he entered Pope John XXIII National Seminary in Weston, MA, to become a Catholic priest and was ordained in 1968. Bernie served in several conservative parishes in New Orleans during the turbulent post-Vatican II era. With a feeling that he had been prepared for a church he did not recognize, he left the priesthood to pursue a more personal call to service. He persisted, however, to mischievously ask certain friends if they wanted to make their confessions with him, until the end of his days.

In 1973, he earned an RN degree from Northampton Community College and worked for over 20 years in mental health, community, and correctional nursing at institutions in Pennsylvania and New Jersey including: Warren Hospital, Edna Mahon Correctional Institution for Women, and Penn Foundation for Mental Health. He retired in 1999.

Bernie's true public legacy was as a tireless activist and peace advocate. He served as the last President of LEPOCO (before we moved to a Steering Committee leadership) and was a member of Veterans for Peace. Unafraid to stand alone, he was often seen solo on many Lehigh Valley street corners, while holding one of his hundreds of thought-provoking signs advocating for peace or questioning the ethics of our government and representatives' actions. He was arrested numerous times for civil disobedience, including with Plowshares in Washington, D.C., against the neutron bomb, at the Palmer Post Office as a tax resister to war, and with the "Dent Nine" in 2006 who highlighted the Iraqi War dead. Bernie ran for Congress in 1982, 1984, and 1986, on a progressive platform of reducing and redirecting military funding to areas of the common good, such as healthcare, mass transit, and renewable energy. In 1986, he ran a colorful street campaign as the "Lesser Evil."

A gifted and prolific writer and speaker, Bernie, throughout his life, penned countless op-eds and public letters on local and national issues. He had an original style and could inject personality and humor into his biting, often prophetic criticisms.

Bernie was also a talented actor, performing in dozens of regional theatre productions, including, for

LEPOCO at Godfrey Daniels. One memorable appearance at Godfrey Daniels, "Congressman Don meets Cowboy Ron," featured Bernie as Ronald Reagan and Linda as Nancy Reagan. Attendees still burst into giggles recalling the event today.

Bernie was an avid bridge player and a devoted animal lover. He was known for his daily walks with his dogs, Boomer, Jake and his "god-dog" Murphy, and his ever-present pocket full of biscuits for neighborhood pets.

Those who knew Bernie - even those who disagreed with him - respected his honesty, humility, wit, and unwavering commitment to justice. He was genuine, thoughtful, and unafraid to speak truth to power. Bernie lived an authentic life of courage, purpose and heart.

Donations may be made in his memory to a peace organization of your choice, such as LEPOCO, Veterans for Peace, or the Catholic Worker. A celebration of Bernie's life will be announced at a later date.

- Martricia McLaughlin

## Time Has Arrived for a M.E. Peace

Jeffrey D. Sachs and Sybil Fares presented a seven-point peace plan, published by Common Dreams.org on June 30. They say all parties - Israel, Palestine, the U.S. and the Middle East - would benefit. Here are the seven points.

First, an immediate cease-fire would apply across the entire region - and the cease-fire would include an immediate release of all hostages and prisoners.

Second, the U.N. Security Council would vote upfront to welcome Palestine as the 194<sup>th</sup> U.N. Member State on the June 4, 1967, borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Israel and Palestine could subsequently agree on mutually desired border adjustments.

Third, Israel would withdraw from all territories occupied since 1967. U.N.-mandated international forces would ensure a peaceful, orderly transition; a transfer of Palestinian territories to Palestinian authorities; and mutual security for both Israel and Palestine.

Fourth, the territorial integrity and sovereignty would be guaranteed for Lebanon, Syria, and all states in the region. All non-state armed groups would be demilitarized, and foreign troops would be withdrawn.

Fifth, the U.N. Security Council would adopt an updated nuclear agreement with Iran, including binding verification, and with all economic sanctions on Iran lifted alongside Iran's verified compliance with the peaceful uses of its nuclear program.

Sixth, Israel and all Arab and Islamic states would establish full diplomatic relations following the admission of the State of Palestine as a U.N. member state.

Seventh, the Middle East nations would establish an international fund for rebuilding the war-torn parts of Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine, with contributions from within the region and from external sources.

# Bits & Pieces

⊕ Nigeria's government has posthumously pardoned nine activists known as the Ogoni Nine, who were hanged in 1995 after a sham military trial that targeted peaceful protesters demanding an end to oil drilling and environmental damage in the Niger Delta. Among those receiving a pardon was the late Ken Saro-Wiwa, who led the movement against the Shell Oil Company's practices in Ogoniland. Amnesty International's Nigeria director said the pardons fall far short of the justice the Ogoni Nine need and deserve. He also said the executions gave the Nigerian government and oil companies, including Shell, "license to crack down on protests and intimidate people in the Niger Delta who have been demanding justice and an end to the toxic pollution." Delestine Akpobari of the Ogoni Solidarity Forum, said, "You cannot pardon someone who has not committed any crime: we demand full acquittal." (Main source: "Democracy Now," 7/19/25.)

⊕ Second Harvest Food Bank has lost all of the fresh produce, meat, dairy that they had coming in from local farmers due to the funding cuts by the Trump Administration along with the delay in passing the Pennsylvania budget, according to their Associate Executive Director Sarah Wassel. The cuts in federal funding have set back their service to 200 partnering agencies and families in need across Lehigh, Northampton, Monroe, Wayne, Pike and Carbon counties.

They say they always need canned chicken and tuna, pasta, beans, rice, peanut butter, cereal and granola bars. Donations can be made directly to local food pantries or to Second Harvest, 6969 Silver Crest Road, Upper Nazareth Township. (Source: Lehigh Valley News, 7/27/25.)

⊕ The intersection of Wyandotte and Third Streets, in south Bethlehem has been a location for peace demonstrations for decades. Now there are the weekly Peace Vigils on Thursdays, 4-5 pm, and on July 7<sup>th</sup>, local Indivisible members held a die-in saying Medicaid Cuts Kill.

⊕ In late June both the U.S. and Israel dropped bombs on Iran. On June 24<sup>th</sup> Israel attacked Evin Prison, killing at least 36 detainees, staff members, and visitors. The area hit held individuals allegedly connected to Israel among others.

The U.S. bombed Iran's nuclear facilities. Beyond Nuclear wrote that, "The consequences of a successful bombing raid on a civil nuclear plant could include widespread release of highly harmful and persistent radiation, forcing mass and permanent evacuations and sickening and killing thousands or more in both the near- and long-term."

In one week in June, 130 Iranian nationals were taken by ICE, adding to the upwards of 670 Iranian Americans in detention nationwide. (Sources: Beyond Nuclear & National Iranian American Council.)

⊕ The U.S. Department of Agriculture is ending its support for Black farmers due to Trump Administration anti-DEI orders. The agency is eliminating the term "socially disadvantaged," which describes farmers or ranchers who had been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender discrimination, which includes Black, Hispanic, Native American, and Asian groups. Rep. Shontel Brown, of Ohio, said, "...the Department has a long history of locking out and leaving behind Black, Brown and Indigenous farmers... The 'socially disadvantaged' designation was a long overdue recognition of the barriers to land, credit, and opportunity that farmers of color have faced for generations." (Source: Portside Snapshot, 7/24/25.)

⊕ International law experts are describing an early July attack by Israel on a Gaza café as a potential

war crime after an investigation revealed the attack was carried out using a 500-lb bomb supplied by the U.S. government. The attack killed from 24-36 Palestinians and injured dozens more. Casualties included women, children, and the elderly. A prominent photojournalist and artist were also killed.

(Source: CommonDreams.org, 7/3/25.)

⊕ As smoke from Canadian wildfires triggered an air quality alert for New York City and Long Island on July 27<sup>th</sup>, activists with Climate Defiance disrupted a speech by Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee Zeldin in the Hamptons. The disruption came four days after reports emerged that Zeldin's EPA was set to repeal the 2009 "endangerment finding" that greenhouse gas emissions "threaten the public health and welfare of current and future generations." This finding that gave the EPA the authority to regulate climate emissions under the Clean Air Act.

(Source: CommonDreams.org, 7/27/25.)

⊕ On July 22, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said, "The clean energy future is no longer a promise. It's a fact. No government, no industry, no special interest can stop it. Of course, the fossil fuel lobby of some fossil fuel companies will try - and we know the lengths to which they will go. But I have never been more confident that they will fail - because we have passed the point of no return."

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610-691-8730, or by writing  
to [lepoco@fast.net](mailto:lepoco@fast.net).

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Please "like" and "share."

# The Struggle Shared

*"Protests enable members of a democratic community to express their thoughts, cheer on their side, make their voices heard, and combat despair."*

- Austin Sarat, *The Morning Call*, 7/13/25

**THE BIG UGLY BILL** - Among the myriad bad policy and disastrous budget decisions approved by the Congress, the bill that was called beautiful made deep cuts in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Children, older adults, veterans, and people with disabilities will now be faced with new obstacles for accessing food. At the same time, the burden for making sure that people don't go hungry will ramp up for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

For the first time, the state will be faced with paying for a portion of the benefits of the program; historically, the states have been charged for administration of the program but not for the cost of benefits. Often overlooked in debates about SNAP is the importance of the multiplier effect on the economy of the country and the long-term outcomes for children.

"Every \$1 in SNAP benefits generates up to \$1.80 in local economic activity during an economic downturn - helping everyone in the supply chain from the farmer to the grocery store. SNAP helps children grow up healthier, stay in school longer and earn more income as adults." (Food Research & Action Center, <https://frac.org/>)

**GOOD FOOD NEWS (MAYBE)** - Again, this year, there is a push to offer free lunches in school in a bill, not yet introduced, that would also address parental debt for nutrition programs. This effort has gone on for many years and various legislators have introduced legislation that has failed. In light of the federal cuts in SNAP and other crucial safety net programs, making sure that all students can get a midday meal is more urgent than ever. "Pennsylvania legislators hope to include a measure funding free school lunches for all students in the state's budget.

Alongside ensuring free school lunches for all students at schools participating in the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs, the measure would prohibit schools from disciplining students who are not able to pay." ("Free School Lunch in Pennsylvania? Lawmakers Want It to Be Part of the Budget," *Spotlight PA*, June 25, 2025)

**GUN VIOLENCE** - CeaseFirePa has announced, "The Trump administration made it easier for gun dealers to break the law and put our communities at risk." Ceasefire asserts that communities will see more illegal guns since the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives has eased its policy toward rogue gun dealers. The statewide anti-gun organization urges the PA State Police to enforce its existing laws regarding guns sales compliance by insured licensed gun dealers. At the same time, CeaseFirePa is urging Pennsylvania legislators to prioritize gun violence prevention as they develop the state's budget. Children should not be afraid in school and all people should be safe in their homes and communities. ([info@ceasefirepa.org](mailto:info@ceasefirepa.org))

**SUPPORT FOR BURMA** - The BRAVE Burma Act (H.R.3190) sought support in Congress for Burma as its people struggle against a military junta. The bill, introduced by Rep. Bill Huizenga (R, MI-4), proposed sanctions for supplying the repressive government with military and energy supplies. The legislation, if passed, would create a Special Envoy for Burma even as Burmese nationals are being deported from the United State. At this date, the bill has been referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs with no other action taken. ([info@rohingyacampaign.org](mailto:info@rohingyacampaign.org)).

**POLITICS AS NAVIGATION** - Haiti is without an elected national government; a transitional government

has been plagued by limits on its power and scandal. The citizens of Haiti, those who haven't fled, are under siege from marauding gangs - gangs that import their weaponry from the United States. Roadblocks and barricades are installed in every neighborhood making movement within the country difficult and dangerous. Adding to the distress is the Trump administration's aggressive Haitian deportations - sending Haitians who fled in distress back to their home country. "In this context, ordinary Haitians engage in politics not through voting or protest, but through the constant work of getting by, around, and through - navigating roadblocks, finding safe routes, and securing basic necessities. Every trip to the market, every journey to work, every attempt to access services becomes a political act of resistance against imposed immobility. This represents a fundamental shift: politics as navigation rather than participation, politics as survival rather than representation." (Greg Beckett, North American Congress on Latin America, [nacla.org](http://nacla.org))

**A QUIET ANNIVERSARY** - The Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance, based in Knoxville, TN, marked the fourth anniversary, on January 22, 2025, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons taking effect. To date, 73 countries, not including the United States or any other state with a nuclear weapons arsenal, have signed the treaty. Under international law, the treaty makes the development, testing, and stockpiling of nuclear weapons illegal. Tanvi Kardile, coordinator with the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance, said, "It is pretty important for people in Tennessee to know about the TPNW, because nuclear weapons directly affect people here. We have a plant that, to this day, still makes nuclear weapons. They still process enriched uranium." ([www.orepa.org](http://www.orepa.org))

- Janet Ney



# LEPOCO

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

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## Weekly Peace Vigils

#1) Thursdays

4:00 - 5:00 pm

3<sup>rd</sup> & Wyandotte Sts., Bethlehem  
*Ceasefire Israel-Gaza war. End the wars.  
Witness for peace.*

Call LEPOCO 610-691-8730 for more information.

#2) Wednesdays

12 noon - 1 pm

*Witness for Peace with Rick Dow  
L.V. Friends Meeting, 4116 Bath Pike*

Can You Help Staff  
LEPOCO Booths/Displays at  
fairs and festivals?

We plan to be at:  
PrideFest,  
Sunday, August 17;

Easton Farmers Market,  
September 13 & October 11;

Peace Fair in Buckingham,  
Saturday, September 20.

Call 610-691-8730.

## Saturday, August 9, 3 pm

80 Years After the Bombings of Hiroshima & Nagasaki  
Join us for Readings, Singing, & Reflection  
Peace Pole, Rose Garden Park, Bethlehem  
See page 1.