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Vol. 61 No. 6

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

L.V. Palestine Coalition to Present Teach-in on Palestine

The recent UN General Assembly meeting has made clear the continuing relevance of the Gaza Strip as the site of an ongoing genocide, as a demonstration of U.S. and Israeli deceit about what has happened there, and as a sobering reminder of the amoral brutality of U.S. foreign policy. Issues raised there call for further investigation and greater public understanding.

On Saturday, November 14, from 1:00 to 3:00 pm, the Lehigh Valley Palestine Coalition (LVPC), of which LEPOCO is a member, will present a community teach-in, *Palestine: Current Realities.*

The program features an impressive panel: Mark Rosenzweig, long-time educator and activist, presently active in the Lehigh Valley DSA chapter and Jewish Voice for Peace, will speak on, "Antisemitism as Alibi in the Age of Genocide"; Prof. Faramarz Farbod of Moravian University will address, "Palestine: Erasure or Liberation"; Sam Kuttab, a Philadelphia area Palestinian peace activist will talk about, "The Situation on the West Bank." A special feature of the program will be videotaped interviews, "From the Heart of Gaza," by Shalah Ramadan, a Lehigh Valley Palestinian health care worker.

Member organizations of the LVPC, including LEPOCO, will have literature tables. The event will also provide childcare on-site and light Palestinian refreshments. The continuing conflicts in the Middle East cannot be resolved without a solution to the question of Palestine. LEPOCO members and friends are strongly urged to come out for this important educational event.

– Carol Baylor

LEPOCO's Holiday Open House

Saturday & Sunday, December 5&6, 2026

Holiday Cards / Notecards & Postcards with meaningful art & messages / SERRV crafts, soups, coffee, chocolate from around the world / Buttons & Stickers with slogans about pressing issues / Light Refreshments

AI & the Military: New Dimensions of Death

The threat of artificial intelligence (AI) leading to the extermination of humanity has weighed heavily in recent news. Jacob Coxon, who has worked for both Anthropic and Open AI, opined that by the end of the decade AI could threaten the survival of us all. Various tech overlords have echoed his call for regulation before it is too late, while President Trump, in predictable ignorance and with his own agenda, declared the threat yet another "hoax." We may not be facing the predicted annihilation — a vague apocalypse reached when computers attain the "recursive" power to continuously improve themselves and, with the advent of so-called AGI (artificial general intelligence), become more intelligent than homo sapiens and escape "alignment" with human direction and needs. Before computers take over, however, a more immediate danger lies closer to hand.

The U.S. military is moving rapidly to integrate AI into its various branches and operations. AI has moved from being an experimental outpost to playing an important role in intelligence analysis, command decision-making, autonomous weapons, and cyber defense. The result promises both new heights of Defense Secretary Hegseth's beloved "lethality" for civilians and new depths of poverty as citizens bear the costs of AI, which will further enrich a new variety of armaments billionaire — the tech bro. A military-digital complex joins the long-standing military-industrial complex.

First, let's look briefly at the money. The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for next year calls for dramatically increasing the military's investment in AI. Spending on AI this year is (like all military budgeting) a bit murky, but the direct spending on AI systems is $13.4 billion. This is within an overall information technology budget of $66 billion, within which indirect AI costs (AI components in other programs) total $32 billion. Next year, with the administration proposing a 50% budgetary engorgement for the military — to an eye-watering total of $1.5 trillion — the projected outlay for direct AI products is $58.5 billion, roughly a four-fold increase over the current year. If indirect AI expenditures for 2027 are proportional to 2026, they come in at about $125 billion. Contracts for these vast sums are increasingly going to large tech corporations, such as SpaceX and Palantir, which can

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AI & the Military: New Dimensions of Death

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provide integrated AI systems. Elon Musk has been appointed to a new Pentagon advisory board, and Palantir just landed a $10 billion contract with the army for its "Maven" system for processing massive volumes of surveillance material.

Given the massive spending as the Pentagon seeks rapidly to integrate and deploy AI, it is perhaps no accident that President Trump has just announced the creation of an "AI Force" (modeled on the Space Force of his first term) as a new branch of the military. The exact function of this new branch and its relation to the other military branches remain unspecified, and like so many Trumpian innovations, the whole thing might be pure bombast (e.g., his effort to rename AI "Super Intelligence").

In the wars against Gaza and Iran, we have begun to see what the outcomes of an AI assisted military will mean for civilian casualties. The opening days of the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran featured massive AI generated target lists — over 1,000 targets in the first 24 hours — that led, among other things, to the murder of 165 people, including 120 children, at a school in Minab. The U.S. continues to refuse taking responsibility for this war crime.

The genocidal war on Gaza presented a laboratory for U.S.-Israeli cooperation — and for AI-assisted warfare. The U.S. provided Israel with not only armaments on a massive scale but also intelligence and, via contracts with Microsoft and other U.S. tech giants, cloud platforms for the storage of massive amounts of surveillance data. AI's capacity to rapidly scan mountains of data and detect patterns is key to AI-assisted targeting. So many contacts of a certain kind put you on an AI generated "terrorist" list. The result is a new order of death — not only targeted individuals but also all round them. AI-assisted warfare has produced an appalling level of casualties — now over 74,000, mostly women, children and old people — as well as the wholesale destruction of the built environment of the Gaza Strip. The lifeless moonscape of most of Gaza give us a foretaste of what AI-assisted warfare means.

A newly released documentary film, *NAZA* (an IDF acronym derived from the Hebrew term for "collateral damage" and apparently intended ironically) presents interviews with Israeli military officers. The officers detail the AI programs that assisted the destruction of Gaza — programs like "Lavender" and "Where's Daddy?", which identified individuals to be killed and the associated collateral damage, and which determined the best time and place for the killing.

Another indication of the new importance of AI in the military is a key component of next year's NDAA — the integration of the U.S. military and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). The U.S. has long had military partnerships with Israel — U.S. funding and expertise played an important role in Israel's Iron Dome and David's Sling missile defense systems. But now, faced with mounting criticism of U.S. funding for Israel's military, the proposed NDAA envisions a more covertly integrated defense-technology and industrial partnership. The proposal would require the Defense Secretary to consult with Israel's defense minister to create a bilateral technology initiative in order to accelerate research, procurement and production. These programs would make U.S.-Israeli military cooperation more opaque and difficult to end. The final details for next year's NDAA remain unclear — but the current version of the proposal should sound alarms for every citizen.

Whether AI will soon be omnipresent in our lives and whether it results in more harm than good remains an open question. The military's use of AI will not prevent accidentally going to war — in September there was a near-war when an AI chatbot provided erroneous intelligence that a Chinese ship in the Middle East was carrying nuclear weapons components. The opportunities for malevolence, e.g., via AI-generated plans for biological and chemical weapons, are evident. In either case, LEPOCO members and friends need to remain vigilant and wary and need to contact their elected representatives to protest the integration of AI in the military and the integration of the U.S. and Israeli militaries.

- Mick Baylor

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

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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.

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

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

Notes From & About LEPOCO's Book Group

For our September first LEPOCO Book Group meeting we showed the documentary film, *"The Color of Fear"* instead of discussing a book. We invited all to attend in hopes of creating interest and gaining more participants for our monthly group.

The film documents a weekend dialogue where nine men (two white, two African American, two Asian American, and two Latino/Hispanic Americans plus the director, Lee Mun Wah) confronted their personal experiences with systemic racism in the U. S. In a series of emotional and intelligent confrontations, the men reveal the pain and scars that racism has caused them. In the two-hour film, a sense of understanding and trust does emerge as their raw emotions spill forward.

Although moved by their frankness and increasing ability to listen to one another, I was saddened by the reality that this took place at a time (1994) when our nation was actually beginning to deal with racism. Programs and laws were being enacted to fight against it; that no longer is true. Just the opposite is now taking place including a whitewashing of historical truths.

So, back to the book group; each participant chooses a book for the group to read in the coming months of the year. It can be fiction or nonfiction and should in some way deal with peace-and-justice issues. Some books have been biographies, some award winners, and some stories that reveal information new to us. Authors have been women, political writers, authors of color and different religions. We read one book each month (except December and August) and meet the first Tuesday of the following month to discuss the book. The person who suggested the book leads the discussion that month.

We have met for 15-20 years but our ranks have dwindled as members have moved, died, or became unable to attend. Want to become a member? Call LEPOCO and let us know (610-691-8730). Our future depends on increased membership of people who plan to read the books and show up for the discussion. Of course, no one makes every meeting, but a commitment is needed when one joins to make most of them. If you are interested in joining the group we would love to have your suggestion of a book for the group to read in 2027.

The group has been meeting in the early evening. We have decided to meet in the afternoon at 1:30 pm, on the first Tuesday of the month. We hope this will be a more convenient time for readers.

The book to be discussed on November 3rd, at 1:30 pm, is "James" by Percival Everett. This 2024 Pulitzer Prize winner reimagines "The Adventure of Huckleberry Finn," from the perspective of the enslaved Jim, Finn's companion, who is portrayed as intelligent and self-aware. The novel explores the themes of slavery, racism, and the search for freedom and identity.

On December 1st, the group will discuss "Peacemaker: U Thant and the Forgotten Quest for a Just World," by Thant Myint-U. The book tells the story of U Thant, the first non-European Secretary General of the United Nations. His life and work are retold by his grandson in this beautifully written biography.

- Diane Dilendik

You're Invited to a Theatre Party!

An afternoon of theatre, refreshments, and good company

We hope you will join LEPOCO for a special theatre outing to see "The House That Will Not Stand," followed by refreshments and conversation in the LEPOCO Peace Center.

Date: Sunday, November 8th
Time: 2 pm
Venue: Zoellner Arts Center, Diamond Theatre – 420 E. Packer Ave., Bethlehem
Gathering: Head over to LEPOCO Peace Center, 53 E Lehigh St., Lower Level, right after the play, for discussion, cider, and snacks!
Ticket price: $25

"The House That Will Not Stand" is a haunting exploration of Black female agency, the cost of freedom, and the ghosts we inherit.

Please RSVP by **Wednesday, November 4th** to LEPOCO at 610-691-8730 or lepoco@fast.net to let us know how many seats you'd like to purchase.

You can also make reservations and purchase tickets via PayPal on our website: www.lepoco.org

See you at the theatre!

Letter-Writing Group Meeting Wed., October 28

The new letter-writing group has had two meetings with several people participating. Another session is scheduled for Wednesday, October 28, 6 to 7 pm at the Peace Center, 53 E. Lehigh St., #1-LL, Bethlehem. The group welcomes all to join in this letter-writing hour, as we reach out to those who have the power to make change in areas of our concern for peace and justice.

Supplies (stationery, postcards, envelopes, fact sheets, short writing-points list, and postage) will be supplied by LEPOCO, but donations of any of these would be welcome -- including pre-printed address labels for representatives/legislators. Topics have included: stopping the wars, stopping automatic registration for the military draft, stopping the ICE raids.

Due to the holiday season the group will not meet again until Wednesday, January 27.

Inge Karlberg-Stannik, convener of the group says, "Please join us if you can. Reach out to me with any questions at frauinge@gmail.com."

Stop the Invasive Data Centers

Anywhere you drive in the Lehigh Valley, you'll see yard signs against data centers. The Lehigh Valley has been a hotspot for many developers and industries, for many reasons over the years. The AI data center boom is the latest example.

Massive data centers are proposed in Allentown, Bethlehem, South Whitehall, and places in between, despite overwhelming opposition. Communities across the country have shared dire warnings about the impacts of data centers, particularly those considered "hyperscale."

Data centers are enclosed spaces that store thousands of servers, which run 24/7. That constant use drains massive amounts of electricity. Data centers also require millions of gallons of water per day to cool servers. Usually, they use municipal water, which is often consumed, meaning it becomes wastewater and isn't returned to source. Some data centers do return water to sources, but at much higher temperatures than when the water was extracted. In addition, these tech giants are often given tax breaks and waivers, passing their utility costs onto the communities. In a country and state struggling with utility costs, on a planet suffering from climate change, why are we being forced to invest time, money, and resources into this dangerous industry?

Data centers also disrupt local communities and wildlife with noise pollution. Thousands of servers, cooling systems, and electricity generators running 24/7 create an inescapable hum louder than average human speech. Noise-sensitive populations, like neurodivergent people, young children, and older adults will feel the effects of this hum the most. The vibrations also cause pollinators and other vital wildlife to lose their sense of navigation, making it more difficult for them to find food and water, and therefore to survive.

Lehigh Valley Stands Up has formed a Data Center Resistance Team to counteract Big Tech's push to impose hyperscale data centers on our communities. After learning about Air Products' plan to build a data center on the site of their former Upper Macungie headquarters, we organized our neighbors, held a community conversation about data centers and Big Tech, and turned folks out to all of the public hearings that have been held locally. After months of making our demands known, the Upper Macungie Zoning Board denied the proposal, and Air Products abandoned their project.

With your help, we can stop other data center projects in the Valley. Join us at our weekly planning meetings on Thursdays, at 5 pm, on Zoom, to stand with us against the billionaire tech bros taking advantage of our neighbors!

Sign up here: tinyurl.com/lvsudcinterest.

- Alicia Ruthrauff



Potluck & Politics: Film & Discussion, November 20th

A new military draft registration is facing young people. On Friday, November 20th, the film, "What I Want You to Know," will be shown as part of a Potluck & Politics program at LEPOCO. The film is a documentary that lays bare the extent of what war does to those who do the actual fighting, particularly with regard to moral injury, the profound psychological and emotional wound that many veterans carry from their wartime experiences.

The film is directed by Catie Foertsch and is 56 minutes in length.

Following the film, Rick Dow will make a presentation about conscientious objection, followed by a time for questions and discussion. Rick is an active member of LEPOCO, a Quaker, a convener of the Annual Nazareth-to-Bethlehem Christmas Peace Pilgrimage (see enclosed flyer), a regular peace vigiler (on Wednesdays on Rt. 512 at the L.V. Friends Meeting and on Thursdays with the Third & Wyandotte vigil in south Bethlehem, and he was a conscientious objector.

The Struggle Shared

"O, let my land be a land where Liberty is crowned with no false patriotic wreath, but opportunity is real, and life is free. Let America be America, where equality is in the air we breathe."

- Langston Hughes

"THE DEATH PENALTY HAS NO PLACE IN ANY SOCIETY," Volker Türk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United States are the top executioners in the world. 113 countries have abandoned the death penalty while others have not executed anyone in many years.

The World Day Against the Death Penalty was recognized on October 10, 2026. On September 30, the state of Tennessee tried, and failed, to complete the execution of Christa Pike by lethal injection of pentobarbital. On October 7, the state of Texas executed Jamaal Howard by lethal injection of pentobarbital.

Closer to home, Pennsylvanians against the Death Penalty issued a call to action in response to the "grotesque and deeply disturbing" attempt at killing Christa Pike. "A system that assumes the extraordinary power to take a person's life also assumes an extraordinary responsibility to ensure that the person in its custody is treated with dignity and humanity.

"This is the truth of capital punishment -- there is no humane way to kill a person. No system free from flaws. No process that doesn't create more harm."

The announcement that the firing squad execution of Nidal Malik, the Fort Hood killer of nine people, will be livestreamed has been met with swift and vehement opposition from anti-death penalty advocates, faith organizations, and politicians of both major parties.

"The question about the death penalty is not whether people deserve to die for crimes they commit. The real question is: Do we deserve to kill?" - Bryan Stevenson

AS THE WAR RAGES IN THE MIDDLE EAST with the United States and Israel joined in combat against Iran, another conflict in Yemen has heated up after several years of cease-fire. Saudi-backed Yemeni government forces and Houthi militia are fighting again. Their warfare could displace more than 200,000 people. While the United States has declined, so far, to participate in air strikes in support of Saudi Arabia's offensive against the Houthis, the US military, as in the past, is providing intelligence and targeting data.

In early October, Pres. Trump threatened to join the assault on Yemen. Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA) and Rep. Thomas Massie (R-KY) introduced a Yemen War Powers Resolution (H.Con.Res.124) to mandate that the US stay out of war in Yemen.

By the end of 2021, the pre-cease fire combat caused the excess deaths of 377,000 people, as estimated by the United Nations Development Program. This total included 154,000 deaths from hunger, disease, and the lack of health care. Children under the age of five accounted for the greatest number of deaths, 259,000. The new fighting has already driven more than 149,000 people from their homes and the World Food Program reports that millions of Yemenis face acute food insecurity because delivery routes have been interrupted. Sources: Action Corps & Democracy Now.

ABU GHRAIB, a prison that remains a symbol of violent abuse of prisoners of war, has led to another disgraceful episode. In 2008, three prisoners in the Iraqi jail filed a lawsuit against CACI Premier Technology for damages as a result of torture. Sixteen years later, in November 2024, a federal jury found the company liable for torture and ordered it to pay the three prisoners $42 million. After an appeal, the verdict was upheld in March of 2026. But, the Supreme Court, in another case, reversed a 2004 ruling on the Alien Tort Statute. This high court decision nullified "a vital law that could check corporate abuses and provide an essential remedy to those whose rights have been violated," according to law professor Erwin Chemerinsky. Following the Court's decision, the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals dismissed the plaintiffs' claims. One of the former prisoner plaintiffs said, "History will show that it was the Supreme Court that denied us justice." Source: *CommonDreams.*

PRESENTÉ: The national peace community mourns the recent deaths of peacemakers: John Miller, Judith Mahoney-Pasternak, and Geov Parrish. Each of them brought their considerable talents and varied backgrounds to the War Resisters League (WRL) and are remembered fondly by WRL members and colleagues.

John Miller was a co-founder and the National Coordinator of the East Timor & Indonesian Action Network - ETAN/U.S. Commemorations for John took place in New York and in East Timor. He was a tireless worker for justice and peace, committed to effective solidarity, and a friend and comrade to fellow activists throughout his life. He served on WRL's National Committee for many years.

Judith Mahoney-Pasternak was a New York–born journalist, writer, editor, socialist, and activist. She is remembered for her creativity, honesty, and lifelong commitment to activism. Judith's activism began in the 1960s civil rights and anti-war movements, continued in the 1970s feminist movement, and extended into peace, social/economic justice, and Palestinian self-determination. From 1995 to 2005, she edited *The Nonviolent Activist* for WRL.

Geov Parrish was a Seattle-based political journalist, peace activist, and social justice organizer known for his incisive commentary, sharp humor, and decades of progressive advocacy. His work challenged readers to think critically about politics and social issues, and he was known for his "snarky contrarian" style. Geov served on the WRL National Committee for several terms.

- Janet Ney

Remembering

As August moved to September, we lost three people who have inspired many of us.

Dolly Parton died on August 25. She was 80 years old. One writer said we should honor her legacy with generosity, kindness, compassion, respect, and unity. Besides being a beloved musician and performer, she supported the community where she grew up and did extensive work to support libraries - donating millions of books to young children. She also donated millions of dollars to medical research including her support for research on the COVID vaccines. She embraced DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion); supporting the LGBTQ community, Black Lives Matter, and people with disabilities. Dolly Parton had empathy toward the homeless and empathized with the plight of migrant workers and covered the Woody Guthrie song, "Deportee." She was a proud union member and celebrated women workers as part of the 1980 movie and song, "9-5." She accepted people from all walks of life.

Wendell Berry died on August 31. He was 92 years old. Wendell Berry was a prolific writer and Kentucky farmer, known for his advocacy of rural life, for urging readers to develop a close connection to farming and food, and for calling for care of the environment. Bill McKibben writes that Wendell Berry's "essays on rural America were the words that launched 10,000 farmers markets." Wendell Berry did not especially like movements but understood moral witness; he joined an occupation of the Kentucky governor's office to protest mountaintop removal coal mining and another protest of a power plant on Capitol Hill. He did not own a computer or a smartphone and often wrote letters with a pencil on lined yellow paper.

Gloria Steinem died on September 2. She was 92 years old. She will always be remembered as a feminist leader and co-founder of "Ms. Magazine." Much of her life as an advocate was spent on the road, speaking at college campuses and community centers, at rallies and marches. But her leadership and activism touched many other issues. One significant example was her participation in the Women Cross the DMZ event in 2015. She was part of a 30-member international delegation of women who made the crossing during the 70th anniversary year of Korea's division. A few years after the crossing Gloria Steinem wrote, "One of the most rewarding things I've ever done in my life was a Peace Walk Across the DMZ between North and South Korea, together with 30 women leaders from around the world."

Another famous feminist activist and writer, Robin Morgan, died a few days after Gloria Steinem, on September 5. She was 85. Rogin Morgan was a close friend of, and fellow activist with Gloria Steinem.

- Gathered by Nancy Tate

Remembering the 9/11 Tragedy

September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows held a rally and a candlelight vigil the day before the 25th anniversary last month. The organization was founded by family members of those killed on September 11th who have united "to turn our grief into action for peace."

In November 2001 family members of 9/11 victims led a DC-NYC walk under the theme, "Our Grief Is Not a Cry for War." Craig Amundson was killed in the attack on Pentagon. His wife, Amber Amundson, and his brother, Ryan Amundson, both joined the walk. Amber wrote at the time, "I call on our national leaders to find the courage to break the cycle of violence."

A week after the attack, the LEPOCO Steering Committee issued a statement on September 18th that opened, "Our hearts remain broken with sadness following the acts of terror that took so many precious lives a week ago today," and closed, "While the men who rained terror from the clear blue skies on September 11 have stolen irreplaceable lives, valuable structures, and our sense of security, we can choose a rational response. We can pledge to break the cycles of violence and victims."

On Sunday, October 7, LEPOCO and a dozen supporting sponsors, held "6000 Steps for Peace: Our Grief Is Not a Cry for War" at the Rose Garden in Bethlehem. As the program ended the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan was announced.

- Nancy Tate

Just Since January 2025 ... the U.S. has planned and carried out:

- military drone murders of hundreds of unidentified people in small boats in the Caribbean;
- the complete blockade and strangulation of the Cuban economy and forced hunger and health harms of the Cuban people;
- the murderous invasion of Venezuela and kidnapping of President Maduro and First Lady Cilia Flores;
- the trashing of Honduras' November 2025 electoral process and pardoning of former President Juan Orlando Hernandez, a convicted drugs and weapons smuggling cartel leader;
- aggressive interventions in Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Bolivia, etc., with Brazil's October elections now targeted.

Each of these destructive, deadly interventions has been openly supported, or quietly acquiesced to by U.S. allies Canada, England, France, Germany, Italy, Israel, etc. All of this on top of the on-going, U.S.-led, Western-supported genocide in Palestine, and bombing of and aggression against Iran.

- From "Rights Action" a Toronto, ON, and Washington, DC, based organization (www.rightsaction.org.)

Bits & Pieces

☮ PIRG (the Public Interest Research Group) reports that "very little plastic actually gets recycled..., but single-use plastics have taken over our world – clogging our oceans, polluting our roadsides and littering our green spaces for centuries... When 400 million tons of new plastic are entering our world every year, the only true and lasting solution is to produce less plastic to begin with."

☮ Microplastics proliferate throughout the entire Delaware River Watershed..., according to a report by PennEnvironment. The report, Microplastics in the Delaware River Watershed, used samples from sites in Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and Delaware. Fourteen million people get their drinking water from the watershed. People in the U.S. throw enough plastic away every 15 hours to fill up the entirety of Lincoln Financial Field, Philadelphia. PennEnvironment advocates solutions including plastic packaging laws, bans on plastic bags and other single-use plastics and bans on plastic manufacturers from releasing plastic pellets into waterways.
Source: "The Morning Call," 10/3/26.

☮ In early September conservationists worldwide were mourning the news that a rescued orangutan on the Indonesian island of Borneo had died – his lungs destroyed by the smoke of his burning forest. This was a heartbreaking symbol of humanity's rapacious destruction of fragile ecosystems. In this case it was the ravages of the palm oil industry on the rainforests where the critically endangered primates once thrived. Now they struggle "close to the point of extinction."
Source: "CommonDreams," 9/4/26.

☮ On September 24th students, faculty, union leaders, clergy leaders, elected representatives, food service employees gathered at Lehigh University to support Sodexo employees seeking fair wages and hours as full-time employees. Sodexo Group is a leading food service company. The union, Unite Here is representing the workers.

☮ The Quixote Center based in Silver Spring, Maryland, celebrated its 50th anniversary in September. The Center does support work for migrant justice, support for Haitians, Nicaraguans and others across the Americas. In the 1980s people locally collected clothing and other humanitarian aid for shipment by the Quixote Center to Nicaragua during their civil war.

☮ In Japan, anger hit a "boiling point" as a U.S. Marine was accused of murdering a woman in Okinawa. On October 4th. Lance Cpl. Devin Jacob Ballard, 20, who is stationed at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, was arrested by Japanese police on suspicion of killing 39-year-old Anna Yagi at a hotel in Naha, and stealing her wallet and backpack. Yagi died from asphyxiation caused by pressure to her neck, according to Okinawa police. Ballard denied the allegations.

The killing sparked protests in Okinawa and Tokyo. A woman in Nago said, "I feel it's a contradiction that a serviceman stationed at a U.S. military base in Okinawa to protect Japan has killed a civilian." While many Okinawans appreciate the economic and security benefits of having U.S. bases in their backyards, distrust of American troops in Okinawa --which was conquered during the closing months of World War II at the cost of over 100,000 civilian lives -- runs deep.
Source: "CommonDreams,"10/5/26.

☮ The Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space organized an international Keep Space for Peace Week, October 3-10, under the slogan, "Space is a Global Commons – Not To Be Dominated."

☮ As of late September, Israel was blocking hundreds of wheelchairs for injured children from entering Gaza. More than 11,000 children in Gaza have severe life-changing injuries, including thousands who have had limbs amputated as a result of Israel's assault on Gaza. Gaza has the world's largest concentration of child amputees. Now, as Australian charities seek to deliver hundreds of wheelchairs to the children injured in Israel's onslaught, Israel has reportedly been blocking them for more than a year and a half.
Source: "CommonDreams," 9/21/26

☮ "We cannot allow this evil to continue," said one commentator after reading a CNN reporter's description of an immigration court hearing in Harlington, Texas, on Monday, where children as young as three appeared without legal representation and were asked by a judge whether they wanted a "voluntary" departure from the U.S. or a deportation order. A leader of the Acacia Center for Justice told CNN that before the group lost a $200 million contract in July when the administration allowed it to lapse, it was practically unheard of for children to appear in court without legal representation.
Source: "CommonDreams," 9/29/26.

Check out the LEPOCO website at www.lepoco.org for Events, Newsletter Archive...

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

Follow LEPOCO on Facebook & Twitter. "Like" & "share," often.

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☼ ☼ ☼

Weekly Peace Vigils (Thursdays)

October 22 & 29: 4:00 – 5:00 pm

November 5, 12, 19: 3:30 – 4:30 pm

3rd & Wyandotte Sts., (south) Bethlehem

Stop Trump's wars on Iran & Caribbean boats...
End Israel's attacks on Gaza., Iran, Lebanon...
End all the wars. Witness for peace.

Call LEPOCO, 610-691-8730, for more information.

LEPOCO's Holiday Open House

Saturday & Sunday, December 5&6, 2026

Holiday Cards / Notecards & Postcards with meaningful art & messages / SERRV crafts, soups, coffee, chocolate from around the world / Buttons & Stickers with slogans about pressing issues / Light Refreshments

Monthly Letter-Writing Group

LEPOCO Peace Center
53 E. Lehigh St., #1-LL
Bethlehem (18018)
(See page 3 for more info.)

LEPOCO Theatre Party

"The House That Will Not Stand"

Sunday, November 8th 2:00 pm

Refreshments & Conversation after the Play at LEPOCO

(See page 3 for more information)