

Annual Report from Coordinator for AGM 2022

Our Holocaust Memorial Day in January 2020, with a full page spread in the NWN, was our last event. October 2020 UN Day had an article in the NWN, as did January 2021 Holocaust Memorial Day.

During the intervening period, in the absence of being able to meet with our M. P. we were able to address our campaigns to Laura Farris by email on the escalating house seizures of the Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights which she agreed was not acceptable, and the need to enter Yemen for urgent aid and medical supplies.

Dear Graeme,

Thank you for your email and also for your understanding about the limitations, at present, of face-to-face meetings. You raise two important international issues.

Firstly, on Yemen, the UK is leading the international effort to respond to the crisis through both our humanitarian response and diplomatic influence.

Since the conflict began, the UK has committed over £1 billion of humanitarian funding, which has helped meet the immediate food needs of millions of Yemenis, treated thousands of children for malnutrition and provided over one million people with improved water supply and basic sanitation. We have also committed to spend at least £87 million on humanitarian aid to Yemen in 2021/22, which is enough to feed 240,000 of the most vulnerable Yemenis every month, support 400 healthcare clinics and provide clean water for 1.6 million people. The UK is calling on all states to release humanitarian funding commitments promptly.

There is no military solution to this conflict. An inclusive political settlement is the only way to bring long-term stability to Yemen and to address the worsening humanitarian crisis. The UK has been at the forefront of international diplomatic efforts to bring this about, fully supporting the UN Secretary-General and the UN Special Envoy's peace plan.

The Foreign Secretary raised Yemen with Saudi counterparts on her visit to Riyadh in October, and UK officials have continued to engage with all parties concerned since. This has been done bilaterally and via the UN Security Council, where the UK has used its role as a penholder to move the peace process forward and ensure that Yemen continues to be a top priority for the international community.

The UK is not a party to the military conflict as part of the Saudi-led coalition and I am assured that HM Government will continue to urge all parties to engage constructively with the UN process.

Secondly, regarding Israel, the UK is clear that eviction of Palestinians from their homes causes unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians, calls into question Israel's commitment to a viable two-state solution and, in all but the most exceptional of cases, is contrary to International Humanitarian Law and the Fourth Geneva

Convention, the latter of which applies to all occupied territories, and prohibits demolitions or forced evictions absent military necessity. I join Ministers in calling for them to cease with immediate effect.

The UK regularly makes clear our concerns about the evictions of Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem to the Israeli authorities and the Municipality of Jerusalem, both bilaterally and in co-operation with like-minded diplomatic partners, including at a Ministerial level. The UK also regularly makes our position clear on the world stage, including via the main organs of UN such as the Security Council, Human Rights Council and General Assembly.

Thank you again for taking the trouble to contact me and best wishes for the Christmas season. Laura

Laura Farris MP
Member of Parliament for Newbury

Thank you for your email and I do apologise for my delayed response. This is an issue that many of my constituents have written to me about and the UK Government has repeatedly called on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law. I would also like to assure you that there is regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation and the UK regularly raises the issue of forced evictions from their homes, including in Sheikh Jarrah.

The Government has publicly expressed concern over tensions in Jerusalem linked to the threatened eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah and continues to monitor the situation in East Jerusalem closely, including officials visiting areas at risk of demolition and evictions and attending related court hearings.

Thank you again for taking the time to write to me.

Best wishes,

Laura

I record my thanks to Stephanie Steevenson for her valued assistance, including Zoom meetings arranged by H. Q., Melanie and Steve for producing material, Colin for speaking at events and Marion for advice.



Newbury marked the UN Day commemorations

Global warming message at town's UN Day event

MEMBERS of Newbury Town Council joined residents for the UN Association's UN Day commemorations, held on Monday last week at the Town Hall.

The event celebrates the ideal of international cooperation, embodied in the United Nations organisation – and this year's occasion had an environmental theme.

COP26 kicked off on Sunday, and the town council has endorsed the Government climate bill drafted in light of the summit.

Newbury mayor Billy Drummond said: "The UN is an international organisation, founded in 1945 after the Second World War by 51 countries committed to maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations and promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights.

"Back in 1945 not one single nation had heard of global warming, but today the majority of all people know about global warming.

"Every year the UN holds a global climate conference known as a COP which stands for 'Conference of the Parties'.

"This year COP26 is being held in Glasgow starting on October 31, and finishing on November 12.



Graeme Panting speaks at Town Hall

"Newbury Town Council has already taken the brave and bold decision to declare a climate emergency, and to ensure activities of Newbury Town Council are carbon natural by 2030 or before.

"Becoming carbon natural will be a core ongoing priority for NTC, and will result in clear targets and potentially new ways of working across the organisation."

For UN Day October 2021, we were able to resume at the Town Hall, Market Place, hosted by the Mayor, Councillor Billy Drummond, and WBC Deputy Chairman, Rick Jones, Thatcham Mayor, John Boyd, all spoke on their Council's environmental strategies, with a good number of representatives giving readings on the theme of the UN Climate Conference

Glasgow in December. Messages were sent to our UNA Scottish Coordinator on concerns to take forward. In the absence of Marion Paterson our president, Chris Marriage, former chairman presided.

We await feedback on the responses to our representations.

In our reflections we remembered the Palestinians, Yemen, Myanmar and Tigray and included a special message from David Saunders, former UN worker in Afghanistan: 'That humanitarian assistance must continue only if women feature as normal in the provision, conditionality that women and girls' rights under international signed under the law, are fully implemented and monitored on the ground, (e.g. Secondary Schools, Universities and Health Services).

The UK aligns itself strongly with the UN Agencies that focus on human rights, especially on Women's Rights and Gender Equality.

November - Thatcham Remembrance Sunday Parade with UN standard

In the absence of Colin Stone and Henry Moffat, it fell on Graeme to carry the flag, supported by Melanie, Xia and Amelia.'



In January 2022, we held the Holocaust Memorial Day outside the Town Hall, hosted by the Mayor, with the Deputy Chairman of WBC and Thatcham Mayor, a good number of people attended, also supported by Kennet Radio.

Graeme presided and a number of supporters gave readings as well as observing a silence for those countries in conflict.

This was well supported by W. Berks and Town Councillors, which included the new Director who expressed the desire to be involved in the next year, also Lynne Doherty, leader W. B. Council.

There was a letter in the NWN regretting the venue being adjacent to market stalls, more publicity required, and suggesting the event be held at the W. B. Council offices where a tree had been planted, adjacent to a plaque.

Graeme Panting