



## Network of Christian Peace Organisations

This briefing is produced by the Network of Christian Peace Organisations to help Christian communities to prepare for the 2015 General Election by challenging parliamentary candidates with questions about militarism and war, peace and justice. 2015 will also see a new Strategic Defence Review and a review of the National Security Strategy, and Christians must add their voices to debate on these strategies.

We are called as Christians to be peacemakers; to love not just our neighbours but also our enemies; to care for the poor, the sick and the needy as well as for God's creation. We believe we are called to work unceasingly for a world in which all God's children are treated fairly and with respect – and where unbridled human greed, violence and animosity towards the 'other' are no longer acceptable in a civilised society.

Our vision of peace is based on right relationships between people and with God: on justice, trust, mercy and respect. As people of faith we have a responsibility to turn our vision into something real by engaging in nonviolent work for political change that will ensure the common good. The run-up to the General Election is an important opportunity for this.

# General Election Briefing 2015



Christians together for peace. Credit: Hygenus Valentine

*Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid...Micah 4*

### Members of the NCPO

Anglican Pacifist Fellowship  
Baptist Peace Fellowship  
Campaign Against Arms Trade Christian Network  
Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament  
Christian International Peace Service  
Church and Peace  
Community of Reconciliation  
Congregational Peace Fellowship,  
Fellowship of Reconciliation England  
Franciscan Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation  
Martin Luther King Peace Committee  
Methodist Peace Fellowship  
Northern Friends Peace Board  
Pax Christi  
Quaker Peace and Social Witness  
Student Christian Movement  
United Reformed Church Peace Fellowship

**Contact:** NCPO, c/o Pax Christi,  
St Joseph's, Watford Way,  
London NW4 4TY  
0208 203 4884  
[www.ncpo.org.uk](http://www.ncpo.org.uk)

### What you can do

- Work with other churches and local groups to arrange a pre-election meeting with candidates. Use this guide to help you frame questions.
- Write to local papers and describe your vision of security for the UK and the world. Suggest that this issue be raised with election candidates.
- Write to your own prospective candidates and ask about their / their party's vision of security. Use this as a way-in to deeper discussion.
- Organise a time of prayer with other churches - that candidates will be guided by Gospel values and a commitment to the common good.
- Join one of the member organisations of NCPO and keep in touch with peace and disarmament developments and opportunities all year around.

*We need to create real living economies that work for people and the planet, sharing real living democracy, where every person can participate in making sure we heal the planet, that no person goes hungry, no child goes thirsty, or without schooling or without health care.*

**Vandana Shiva, philosopher, environmentalist,  
December 2013**

# Issues dealt with in this briefing

## Military Spending and Human Security



Credit: Peter Hickey

Among threats to our security the 2010 National Security Strategy listed the following: terrorism, cyber-attacks, unconventional attacks using chemical, nuclear or biological weapons, large-scale accidents or natural hazards, limited energy supplies dependent on fossil fuels, nuclear proliferation, and the impact of climate change on food and water supplies. These are not traditional military threats - yet the Government argues that national self-interest and the protection and security of others is best achieved by military means.

Budgets can be a good indicator of a nation's real priorities. The UK has the 6<sup>th</sup> largest military budget in the world: £38,000 million in 2014. In comparison, £12,000 million was allocated to overseas aid. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office budget was a mere £1,360 million. A shift in priorities from military spending towards social needs at home and overseas would reduce inequality and create a more secure world for all.

While much is said about the impact of climate change little is invested to mitigate it. In 2014, £59 million went into Research and Development (R&D) for renewable energy while £1,460 million was allocated to military R&D.

### What to ask for:

Government should adopt an approach to security which addresses the root causes of conflict, including environmental problems, inequality, and access to resources. Military responses, with their real and hidden costs, do not help.

Military spending and military R&D budgets should be reduced, and spending on social and environmental needs significantly increased.

**Global Day of Action on Military Spending:** <http://demilitarize.org.uk/>

**Movement for the Abolition of War:** <http://www.abolishwar.org.uk/>

## Renewal of Trident

The decision whether to replace Trident nuclear missile submarines will be taken by the new parliament in early 2016. Trident renewal and maintenance is likely to cost well over £100,000 million over the next 35 years. This would commit the UK to possessing nuclear weapons for decades, at a time when the rest of the world is pushing for a treaty to ban all nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapons are designed to cause death and suffering on a scale unparalleled in human history. The policy of nuclear deterrence is nothing other than a threat to other countries that we will indeed use them as a 'last resort'. These are weapons of mass destruction and should be banned.

184 out of 193 countries do not have nuclear weapons of their own and do not argue that they need them to defend themselves.

*As leaders of faith communities in Britain we believe that one significant contribution to a safer world is the abolition of nuclear weapons... Our faith traditions reject the notion that reliance on the threat of mass destruction could ever be right...*

**Trident: Church leaders' letter to The Times, September 2014**

### What to ask for:

Instead of wasting £100,000 million on Trident, Britain should show moral and political leadership by becoming the first of the declared nuclear weapon states to give up its remaining nuclear weapons, and by urgently promoting an international treaty banning all nuclear weapons.

**CND** <http://www.cnduk.org/>

## The UK Arms Trade

The UK ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in the global arms trade market. Between 2009 and 2013 the UK's main clients were Saudi Arabia (42%) USA (18%) India (11%). At the same time, the UK was the largest importer of major weapons in Europe.

Several government departments and members of the Royal Family are involved in the UK Government's aggressive promotion of military and security equipment sales around the world. Hundreds of millions of pounds are given in subsidies to the arms trade. BAE Systems, third largest arms company in the world, has contracts that guarantee a minimum income of £230 million per year from the public purse. BAE Systems is also involved in the development of Trident replacement submarines.

In 2014 the UK sold arms to both Russia and Ukraine. It continued to sell arms to Israel during its offensive 'Operation Protective Edge' against GAZA, illustrating a disregard for human rights, and blatant fuelling of conflicts. Since 2009 the UK has licensed almost £50 million of weapons to Israel and, increasingly, the UK is spending millions on arms and drone technology from Israel.

### What to ask for:

Arms sales are incompatible with human rights. All government promotion of arms exports should cease and the UK Trade and Investment Defence and Security Organisation should be closed.

Export licenses for all arms sales, including co-operation between UK and Israel on drone programmes, should be ended.

**CAAT UK** <https://www.caat.org.uk/>

**Stockholm International Peace Research Institute** <http://www.sipri.org/>

## UK Armed Drones Programme

Armed Drones are unmanned aircraft controlled by pilots from the ground. Their ease of use and low military casualty rate make them an attractive weapon to politicians. Decisions leading to war and military intervention become more likely. The UK began operating armed US Predator drones over Iraq in 2004 and acquired its own armed Reaper drones for operation in Afghanistan in 2007. Since then RAF pilots have operated armed drones in Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq and Syria. While the UK insists it is not involved in the US drone-targeted-killings in Pakistan and Yemen, human rights groups report that UK-supplied intelligence material will almost certainly have contributed to them.

Since the end of combat operations in Afghanistan the UK doubled its armed drone fleet and these armed drones have now been deployed to the Middle East for operations in Iraq and Syria. Their supposed accuracy is hard to verify. Reports indicate that many 'suspected militants' killed are in fact civilians.

*"Drone strikes may decapitate terrorist organizations, but they do not solve our terrorist problem. In fact, drone use may prolong it."* Kurt Volker, former US Permanent Representative to NATO



Credit: Alan Gerrard

### What to ask for:

Armed drones should not be a part of our military strategy as there is little or no accountability regarding their use. How does UK use of armed drones relate to international human rights and humanitarian laws?

Information about the approximately 500 British drone strikes in Afghanistan should be released, now that UK forces have departed.

**Drone Wars UK:** <http://dronewars.net/>



## Britain's Role in the World

The rise of Islamic State and the civil wars now raging across the Middle East region and parts of Africa are a direct result of our own military interventions. These have cost hundreds of thousands of lives and left nothing but fear, chaos and bitterness in their wake.

The latest bombing campaign against Islamic state has poured more fuel on the fires that have been smouldering ever since the British Empire ruled over this region. The UK Government's unquestioning support for Israeli policies and unwillingness to support the legitimate grievances of the Palestinian people underlie much of the problem.

Now is the time for a new approach to the Middle East, and to Britain's role in the world more generally. Britain should be standing up for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and supporting comprehensive peace negotiations with all the parties in the region, including Hamas, Taliban and Islamic State.



Credit: Hygenus Valentine

### What to ask for:

Make public the Chilcot Report and engage in a national dialogue about the lessons to be learned from the Iraq War.

End the bombing of Iraq and Syria and take a leading role in bringing all parties together in the Middle East for a comprehensive peace settlement that would end Western intervention in the region.

In recognition that only justice can bring peace and security to Palestine & Israel, halt all arms sales to Israel, lift the siege of Gaza, and recognise Palestine as a state.

Britain should increase its UN budget and specifically promote the reform and better resourcing of the United Nations as the world's primary peacemaking forum.

**Palestine Solidarity Campaign:** [www.palestinecampaign.org/](http://www.palestinecampaign.org/)

### General resources

**The Ammerdown Invitation: Security for the future – in search of a new vision.** Oxford Research Group  
<http://bit.ly/1CSAa4K>

**Guidance, resources and information for General Election 2015.** Religious Society of Friends  
<http://election.quaker.org.uk/>

**Global Conflict and Sustainable Security** - Video talk by Professor Paul Rogers <http://bit.ly/1uUINGF>

**Give Peace a Budget** – DVD produced by Pax Christi in 2013 on Seven ways to spend \$1.7 trillion. £5.00 from Pax Christi or view here <http://bit.ly/XLvzQd>

**Conflict and Climate Change** - DVD with discussion guide produced by the Movement for the Abolition of War. £9.00

**World in Chains: impact of nuclear weapons and militarisation from a UK perspective.** published by Lauth Press.  
Price £12.99



Network of  
**Christian Peace**  
Organisations

**Contact:** NCPO, c/o Pax Christi, St Joseph's, Watford Way, London  
NW4 4TY  
[www.ncpo.org.uk](http://www.ncpo.org.uk)