



Around Europe

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Mayor of Hiroshima visits European Parliament

As part of the Mayors for Peace Campaign, Mr Akiba, Mayor of Hiroshima and founder of the Mayors for Peace network, visited the European Parliament on Wednesday 19 January. In the morning Mr Akiba addressed the Foreign Affairs Committee on the need for the world to turn away from the nuclear threat.

This is a highly topical issue. The 7th Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) takes place in May 2005. The NPT is a key international treaty for preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to further the goal of nuclear disarmament. The NPT is currently under threat because the Nuclear Weapon States, (Britain, France, USA, China and Russia) who signed the Treaty, have failed to effectively pursue nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. In addition, states who have not signed the NPT have also undertaken nuclear activities. Israel, India and Pakistan have developed nuclear weapons capabilities and are not interested in joining, while North Korea has withdrawn from the NPT.

All EU Member States have signed the NPT (including Britain and France with their nuclear weapons capabilities) and as the Mayor noted in his speech; "Europe has an historic role to play in leading humanity toward a nuclear-weapon-free future".

After speaking at the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. Akiba met with representatives from European peace groups to discuss their plans for action leading up to the Review Conference in May. This was followed by lunch for Mr Akiba's delegation, hosted by the Co-Presidents of the Intergroup for Peace Initiatives, (a forum for MEPs

to discuss and debate peace issues), Tobias Pflüger (GUE - Germany) and Caroline Lucas (Greens - EFA - UK).

After lunch Mr Akiba's delegation attended a hearing in the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committees of

both the House of Representatives and Senate in the Belgian Parliament. Mr Akiba then returned to the European Parliament for a reception hosted by the Intergroup for Peace Initiatives which was attended by MEPs and representatives of European peace groups.

The Mayor's delegation then departed for Antwerp and the day's events concluded with a panel between MEPs and European peace groups working on Nuclear Disarmament. Key issues raised were the next steps that would need to be taken by the European Parliament to move the issue of nuclear abolition forward.

See page 2 for more information on the Mayors for Peace Campaign and how to take action on the NPT.

Robin Bloomfield



New Programme Assistant at QCEA



My name is Robin Bloomfield and I am one of the QCEA Programme Assistants for 2005.

I have spent the last year doing a voluntary internship with Peaceworkers UK, a British charity promoting civilian responses to violent conflict. I found the internship to be a rewarding and enjoyable experience. Before that, I did an undergraduate degree in Peace Studies at the University of Bradford, pursuing my interest in the areas of international politics and conflict resolution.

While at University I was also actively working on issues of concern to me. I was a member of the People & Planet Student Group in Bradford as President in 2002 & Treasurer in 2003. While I was with the group its biggest success was getting the university to switch to green electricity and our Students Union to boycott Esso.

These interests and concerns also led me to attend the Geneva Quaker UN Summer School in 2002 and the QCEA Study Tour in 2003. Both were positive experiences and a great opportunity to meet other people with similar interests. My experience of the QCEA Study Tour directly led me to apply for the post of Programme Assistant.

While I come from a Quaker background, I have only recently begun to explore what it means for me to be a Quaker. I hope that the year at QCEA will help me explore Quakerism at the European level.

I also have some experience with websites. I recently designed and built a website for the Atomic Mirror (www.atomicmirror.org), a small NGO using the creative arts to reveal the consequences of the nuclear age. I hope that my knowledge of websites is one of the skills I can bring to the role of Programme Assistant.

I am looking forward to the next year in Brussels and having the opportunity to contribute to the valuable and important work of QCEA.

Robin Bloomfield

Mayors for Peace: a 20:20 Vision



Mr Akiba, Mayor of Hiroshima addressing the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament (photo courtesy of 'For Mother Earth')

The Mayors for Peace Emergency Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons is enrolling mayors across the globe to come to the 2005 NPT Review Conference. The Mayors for Peace Campaign has proposed that negotiations begin in 2005 and conclude by 2010 for a treaty to eliminate nuclear weapons, with global nuclear disarmament implemented no later than 2020.

Is your Mayor a 'Mayor for Peace'?

To find out how to get your Mayor to join the Mayors for Peace campaign visit: www.abolitionnow.org/mayors.html.

Learn more about Europe & the NPT

Following on from the visit of the Mayor of Hiroshima QCEA has added a new section to its website titled '**Europe and the NPT**'. To learn more about the current challenges facing the NPT visit: www.quaker.org/qcea/npt.htm.

Join the 'Abolition Now!' Campaign

To find out 10 things you can do to support the call for nuclear abolition visit: www.abolitionnow.org/tenthings.html.

For a full report on the visit of the Mayor of Hiroshima to Brussels please visit www.abolition2000europe.org/m4pBrussels.php.



Peace Making in the Middle East

News bulletins on TV and radio and newspapers are full of stories of horror, violence, oppression and suffering. These stories are true and important and we, who live in relative safety, need to hear them.

But these stories are only one part of the situation. There are people, on all sides of the conflict, who try to work together, people to people, to build peace. There are not so many of them. They do not represent a majority of their population. But they make an immensely valuable contribution to the potential for peace in a part of the world where peace seems so elusive.

They don't get much exposure in the world's press. Theirs are quiet stories of individuals taking a first step. It is important to hear their story.

The 'Practising Peace' website, an initiative of Norwich Quakers and Norwich and District Peace Council, is one source of information about these initiatives. It can be found at www.practisingpeace.org/practisingpeace/index.html?all#list.

The site gives information about a whole range of organisations. There are the Mosaic communities, Multinational Housing Cooperatives in Israel that are working to establish integrated communities. They undertake work with groups of young people so that they can be part of the development process and feel ownership of the projects.

There is ACRI, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel. Today, ACRI is Israel's largest and leading human rights organization, and the only body to address the full range of human rights: from the right to liberty through freedom of information; from the right to education through freedom of expression. ACRI works to protect the right of diverse individuals and sectors of society including men and women, religious and secular, Jews and Arabs, those on the political right and left, new immigrants and veteran citizens, unemployed people, and foreign workers.

There is the Sulha Peace Project. Sulha is an indigenous, middle-eastern way of reconciliation. Their goal is to rebuild trust among neighbours, Arabs and Jews, heart to heart, as a grassroots contribution to peace in Israel. In these excruciating and critical times, they feel there is a need for a safe place to hear and appreciate each other's stories, hopes, fears, traditions and cultures beyond a specific political agenda. The Sulha Way is an approach to peacemaking based on heart level reconciliation between the Children of Abraham who are rooted to a land on which they need to coexist. It "melts the ice" allowing participants to reconnect and feel safe to engage in, without fear, healthy, honest relationships. Their gatherings are also rich in food, dance, music, dialogue circles and sacred ritual from Arab and Jewish traditions. It is creating a rapidly growing grassroots movement and attracting a broad cross-section of society including: Muslims, Christians, Jews, Druze, Bedouin, academics, peacemakers, spiritual activists, children, artists, professionals, elders, clergy, educators, secular and religious. In the last 4 years the Sulha has grown from 150 to over 4000 participants.

These are just a few examples. In all, the website lists nearly 30 initiatives or organizations including women's groups, youth groups, groups supporting this grass roots peace process from abroad (for example summer camps for Israeli and Palestinian youth in the US) and much more.

In January, QCEA had the privilege of hosting a member of the Jerusalem Peacemakers and the Sulha Project, Rabbi Eliyahu McLean. We arranged meetings for him with relevant staff in the European Commission and the Council Secretariat and both meetings were useful and positive. We will continue to offer this approach to promoting these initiatives to him and to others because we believe that this is one of the seeds of hope on which a Middle East peace process could be built. It would then be a process owned by the people from both sides, a peace process which takes account of the very different viewpoints of different groups on both sides and which would therefore have the potential for lasting the course.

We encourage Friends and others to become familiar with these initiatives, to support them, to give them publicity wherever possible and to hold them in the light, particularly at this crucial time for peace in the Middle East.

Martina Weitsch



News in Brief

UN Report on Threats, Challenges and Change

A High-level Panel appointed by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to propose ways of strengthening international security has officially announced its recommendations, urging the adoption of new, far-reaching ground rules to help the world face new and evolving threats in the 21st century, and to strengthen the United Nations.

The Secretary-General has given his support to the Panel's proposals stating "The report offers the United Nations a unique opportunity to refashion and renew our institutions".

The Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, entitled 'A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility', is available online at: www.un.org/secureworld/.

Plenary Conference of International NGOs at the Council of Europe

The 2005 Plenary Conference took place on 25 January in the Palais de l'Europe in Strasbourg and was attended by Liz Scurfield. There was a record attendance from the 374 international NGOs (INGOs) enjoying participatory status. They adopted their General Declaration for the 3rd Council of Europe Summit of Heads of State and Government (16-17 May 2005 in Warsaw) as well as new Rules of Procedure.

Liz introduced QCEA's draft resolution on the right of conscientious objection to the payment of taxes for military purposes at the meeting of the INGOs' Human Rights Grouping on 26 January. It was agreed that a full discussion on the subject would be held at its next meeting in April.

Also on 25 January, a memorial stone was unveiled on the forecourt of the Council of Europe to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

New Post at QCEA

QCEA is looking for one young person (age 21-30) to work as Programme Assistant from September 2005. This new post has been made possible through the generous support of German Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). More information and an application pack are available at: <http://www.quaker.org/qcea/pa.htm> or by contacting the QCEA office.

Website Redevelopment

Over the next year QCEA is planning to redevelop its website. We would like to hear from you, the users of the site, and your opinions on what you like about the site, what you would like to see on the site and any other thoughts you have on it. Please e-mail your comments to: rbloomfield@qcea.org



Around Europe

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