Hate Speech:
When Freedom of Expression Restricts Freedom of Expression

On October 18th 2012, Greek Member of Parliament Eleni Zarouli claimed that immigrants are “sub-human[s]” who carry diseases. As Ms Zarouli is, surprisingly enough, a member of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), her statement triggered a debate within the PACE about a possible ban on far-right members affiliated with racist parties. This controversial event illustrates how difficult it is to deal with hate speech in democratic societies. On the one hand, democracy entails freedom of expression, which should let people express their views, although they may be unpleasant to others’ ears. On the other hand, when people use their freedom of expression to broadcast hate speech, they could restrict someone else’s freedom of expression. This is mainly because the ideas conveyed by hate speech are fundamentally at odds with democracy and its principle of equality among citizens.

Hate speech is understood to be “all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance”. It has become more and more visible and worrying in several European countries over the past few years.

Hate Speech + Hate Speech = Hate Crime

Hate speech is currently being disseminated by both politicians and groups of citizens. Policy-makers at all levels have been engaging in intolerant discourse: in 2012, Hungarian Member of Parliament M. Gyöngyösi asked the authorities to gather a list of names of Jews representing a “national security risk”; in July 2013, Member of the European Parliament Marine Le Pen lost her immunity for having compared Muslim prayers in the street to Nazi occupation, and French mayor Gilles Bourdouleix has said that ‘maybe Hitler didn’t kill enough’ when referring to Roma people. Associations of citizens can also spread hate speech: the anti-Roma Hungarian Guard association, for instance, has organised marches aimed at intimidating Roma people.

These discourses, because they are more and more common in the public arena, normalise the stigmatisation of minorities and therefore contribute to an escalation of violence towards them. In Pescara, Italy, an outburst of violence against Roma took place in May 2012: thousands of people threatened and demonstrated against them. In Greece, the third-largest party, Golden Dawn, which is associated with Neo-Nazism, is also associated with armed groups involved in hate crimes. The rise in hate attacks and in hate

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crimes in Greece is extremely worrying: physical assaults against immigrants and lesbian, gay, transsexual, and bisexual (LGBT) people happen on a regular basis.

**How Hate Speech Violates Fundamental Human Rights**

Broadcasting hate speech restricts minorities’ rights. By enhancing a climate of violence against them, hate speech endangers the fundamental rights of some people to life and security. It also prevents them from being able to be who they are and to raise their own voices in society: how could they possibly exercise their right to express themselves or to demonstrate when even doing their jobs or walking down the street has become dangerous?

Hate speech, by threatening some people’s rights to life and security, to free expression and association, violates fundamental human rights that are protected by binding legal texts such as the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights. In addition, hate speech contravenes the democratic concept of equality among people, as it conveys the idea that a certain population is not as good as another, or even that their identity is dangerous for the rest of society. This distinction can be based on the grounds of sexuality, ethnicity or even political preference. Hate speech is therefore particularly contrary to Quakers’ testimony to equality: we believe all people are equal, for we see an inner light in everyone.

**What can Europe do about Hate Speech?**

Because this is an issue of concern, and because it inhibits the rights of some in society to participate fully in democratic governance, European institutions should act to prevent hate speech. The question is: how? Acting by censoring hate speech directly implies setting the border between what may and may not be voiced, which is a very difficult thing to do in a democracy. The Council of Europe’s PACE President Jean-Claude Mignon highlighted this during the debate about the possible ban of far-right members, saying it is not the Council’s job to deny the democratic vote that elected those same members in their home states.

Instead, it is the European institutions’ responsibility to raise awareness and to publicly denounce the spread of hate speech and its disastrous consequences. The Council of Europe is well on its way, as its Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Mužnieks, denounced some national situations: for instance, he publicly denounced the rise in hate crimes in Greece, urging national authorities to take appropriate measures. The Council of Europe is also supporting anti-hate campaigns such as the No Hate Speech Movement, which raises awareness about online hate speech by having internet platforms helping victims of hate speech, reacting to online hate speech, and by being present on social networks to educate young people to human rights.

Meanwhile, the EU remains silent. Not speaking out when, in some member states, hate speech and declared Neo-Nazism go hand in hand, is pure irresponsibility, and reflects a lack of coherence between action and values, given the EU’s commitment to human rights and the Nobel Peace Prize it received last year.

The EU should speak out to denounce hate speech. It should enhance a debate on freedom of expression and make clear that democracy does not mean that any use of freedom of expression is accepted. Freedom of expression first requires safety for everyone in society. People can use their freedom of expression as long as the ideas they convey do not endanger the rights of others.

*Annie Schultz*

See the QCEA website, [www.qcea.org](http://www.qcea.org), for our new briefing paper on the reduction of freedom of expression and assembly in Europe.

Take a look at the Council of Europe ‘No Hate Speech Movement’ on the Council of Europe website: [http://act4freedom.eue.int/no_hate](http://act4freedom.eue.int/no_hate)
Vulnerability and Support for Armed Conflict in Europe:
A Challenge for Peace

Peace is a fundamental requisite for human well-being and development everywhere in the world. Although the majority of the armed conflicts since the end of the Cold War have been located outside the European Union, several EU Member States have been actively involved in many of these conflicts, particularly in the more intense armed conflicts with more than 1,000 battle-related deaths per year. Such involvement is often rationalised as necessary for peace and stability in volatile regions, as humanitarian interventions to stop murder, or as part of making Europe safer in the face of terrorism. However, an examination of choices by EU member States to engage or not to engage in warfare indicates a more complicated reality.

Efforts to explain and understand armed conflict have often focused on various causal structures, such as international alliances, balance of power, arms races, territorial contiguity, etc. In addition to such structural accounts, it is important to grasp the underlying reasons and motives for the policies and rhetoric of political leaders. In the case of democratic EU Member States, it is also important to focus on why aggressive ideas gain support among the public, as public support is often central to such countries going to war.

Research suggests that support for armed conflict requires an elite actively persuading the public to do so. Such elites are social sub-groups, generally consisting of the dominant economic class and the political and military rulers. Support for armed conflict is rarely inherent in any population, although some groups may be easier to persuade than others. If an elite wants to mobilise substantial support for an armed conflict, it is vital to make sure that the justifications are endorsed in the national identity of that particular population, that the rationale given fits with how the members of that particular national group see themselves. If not, either the supposed justifications or the national identity has to be modified. In other words, the elite ensures social acceptance of the conflict by designing a suitable rationale, by redesigning the sense of who the population is, or a combination of both.

Since national identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, this is also when the elite has the greatest opportunity to shape it. Research identifies economic crisis and scarcity as major contributing factors for the success of mythmaking and scapegoating, which ultimately may stimulate violence, especially as conditions of stress often cause people to over-value the protective comfort of their own group. This sense of vulnerability is conducive to cultivating support for conflict not only in times of socioeconomic stress, but also in the sense of exposure to more direct threats from external enemies - although these may be exaggerated or even imaginary.

You do not need to hate your opponents to engage in a conflict. It is enough to merely fear their potential hatred towards you. Both sides of a conflict also tend to view their actions as defensive measures in response to the aggression of the other side. This often results in escalation and in a “sieve mentality”, in which one’s opponents are always perceived to be the side acting dishonestly and aggressively. This escalation eventually reaches a tipping point, over which the conflict flares out of control and becomes self-perpetuating.

We all hold stereotypes, but these are normally flexible. A sudden crisis can quickly produce sharpened stereotypes of the perceived enemy. However, prolonged conflict has a tendency to perpetuate these sharpened stereotypes, and, if many people have suffered, the capacity to maintain resentment over time is high. Again, the more a group of people is involved in a conflict, the more focus is placed on in-group commitments and the less on out-group connections. This results in fewer and fewer opportunities for individual group members to do anything but to support the conflict, since it becomes increasingly difficult to stay in the group unless one joins the group commitment.

Emotions play an important role in how well and in what direction elites can persuade the public to support armed conflict. Freud, for instance, typically
pointed to anxiety as a cause of aggression, while others have identified grief, fear, and shame as leading to the same. Hence, the more the emotions of anxiety, grief, fear, and shame can be brokered into anger, the more susceptible people are to be persuaded by the elite to support armed conflicts. These emotional effects may persist over time and may even be carried over to situations that have no direct relation to the initiating event. This may seem illogical, but human emotions arise not only from specific cognitive appraisals (that are constructed to assist individuals responding to an event that evoked the emotions), but also become implicit perceptual lenses for interpreting subsequent situations. This human tendency to see similar situations in the same way is reinforced if an elite continues to actively promote the emotions - of anxiety and grief, for example - among the public.

Humans like continuity. It is easier to revitalise and highlight past features of a particular national identity, sanctioning the proposed armed conflict, than instigating bigger and more abrupt alterations. The institutional context is important for this process: weak political institutions allow aggressive persuasion by the elite. Any modifications of a national identity to endorse a specific armed conflict are also more easily accomplished if the public can be persuaded that they are vulnerable to scarcity or a threat that can be associated with the adversary. How well this experience of vulnerability can be politicised and controlled by the elite is thus central for altering the national identity, and consequently for mobilising support for the proposed armed conflict.

Economic recession or a recent attack by international terrorism with severe consequences, both events to which a large part of the population can relate, supply opportunities for moulding national identity at that moment and in the period thereafter. These kinds of situations induce emotions that support aggressive response - although this seems to be influenced by how the events are described in mass media. Interpretation of such events, and especially ascribing them to other groups, can therefore be a major factor in creation of conflicts.

There are alternative ways to manage conflict. If the people of the European Union would resist persuasion by the elite to support armed conflict, these alternative ways could be more often used. For example, despite the unfortunate reality of economic recession, a greater focus on social justice would ease the distress of the already disadvantaged, thus reducing the opportunity of racist groups to stir up the xenophobia that currently is on the rise all over Europe. In order to step back from the headline-grabbing crisis type story, journalists and media outlets may need to re-evaluate their raison d’être. Perhaps the responsible social role is not to deliver the highest number of people to the advertisers, but to scrutinize the elite and their interpretations. In other words, journalists should stop over-polarising descriptions of conflicts in order to sell newspapers or increase viewer ratings, and instead carefully assess the policies, rhetoric and decisions of the elite on all sides. Moreover, with increased focus on creating and maintaining communication links between conflicting groups, even in the midst of armed conflict, stereotypes and “siege mentalities” can be overcome. It is difficult, but a requisite, not mainly for ending war, but for building peace.

**Per Becker**

**Per Becker is a Swedish Quaker and Associate Professor in Risk Management and Community Resilience, who works regularly with international development cooperation agencies.**

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**Quaker House News**

**June 5:** Chris took part in a meeting of the ‘Brussels Arms Trade Group’.

**June 5:** Annie and Imogen were at an ALDE Seminar “Russian political prisoners” in the European Parliament, where the declining situation of Russian civil society was acknowledged and debated.

**June 7:** Bethany participated in the European Commission’s Shale Gas Stakeholders Event: an opportunity for experts to follow up on the public consultation and to highlight key recommendations.

**June 14:** Alexandra met with EIB staff to propose improvements to their new social and environmental guidelines.

**June 17:** Chris attended the farewell speech by Ivo Daalder, outgoing US Ambassador to NATO.

**June 24:** Annie helped with the first ever Citizen’s Summit.

**June 24 - 28:** Imogen was in Strasbourg at the Council of Europe INGO Conference and the June Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe: an opportunity to practice her French, understand the workings of the Council of Europe first-hand, and to meet NGO representatives from throughout Europe.

**July 25-28:** Bethany attended France Yearly Meeting, giving a presentation on QCEA’s work and running a ‘how to’ workshop on advocacy.

**July 17-Aug 2:** Alexandra met Irish Friends in different parts of Ireland and presented QCEA’s work at the first Yearly Meeting in Cork.
Narrowing the Gap Between Rhetoric and Reality

On 19 July 2013, the EU published new guidelines ‘on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards.’ These mean, in brief, that legal entities based or active in the illegal settlements are excluded from funding or prizes from the EU.

Background

The borders of Israel are considered to be the borders existing prior to the 1967 annexation of the Palestinian Territories in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, Gaza, and in the Golan Heights. Israel has rejected the international understanding of its borders, and it has allowed Israelis (Jewish settlers) to move into the Palestinian Territories. There are currently over 400,000 settlers living in these settlements, which are considered illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace.

EU action and EU words

Since her appointment to the post of EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs in 2009, Catherine Ashton has made countless statements to reiterate the position of the EU. The QCEA position is that words without action are not achieving peace. Simply saying that the EU believes the settlements to be contrary to international law and an obstacle to peace, does not in itself achieve anything. There has to be some action.

The guidelines published in July represent a first step to answering the many calls for positive action over the years. It is a first, brave, commendable step in the right direction. It is essential that the EU - and specifically Ashton and Research Commissioner Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, - does not backtrack and continue in this brave and important direction.

What do the Guidelines Say and Do?

The guidelines will only come into force in January 2014 when the new financial framework (the medium-term budget of the EU for 2014 to 2020) comes into force. The guidelines affect EU-funded programmes but not trade with Israel and the settlements. (This is not a criticism of the guidelines although it is a caveat to overenthusiasm.)

The guidelines bind the EU and EU agencies, but they do not bind Member States in their bilateral relations with Israel. The guidelines apply to legal entities but not to natural persons, and they do not apply to subcontractors of entities that are funded.

Should we Celebrate?

Yes, we should. This is the first time that the EU has put into a legally binding document its intention to act in accordance with its stated conviction on this matter. You only have to look at Article 1 of the guidelines to know that this is a sea change:

These guidelines set out the conditions under which the Commission will implement key requirements for the award of EU support to Israeli entities or to their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967. Their aim is to ensure the respect of EU positions and commitments in conformity with international law on the non-recognition by the EU of Israel’s sovereignty over the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967. These guidelines are without prejudice to other requirements established by EU legislation.

A call to action!

Along with the celebration, there is more to do:

1. The implementation of the guidelines must be monitored in 2014 and beyond - especially with regard to the possible loophole of the exclusion of subcontractors.

2. The memoranda of understanding entered into between the European Commission and Israel in relation to a range of programmes including research, cultural and academic exchanges and programmes under the European Neighbourhood Programme, should be monitored to evaluate the effectiveness of the guidelines.

3. Pressure needs to be brought to bear on Member States to be consistent with the Union of which they are members and apply the guidelines to bilateral funding.

4. The issue of import of goods produced in the settlements (which are illegal under international law) must still be addressed by the EU and its Member States.

Today’s celebration of the guidelines represents barely a hiatus before the next tranche of work begins. These new guidelines need to be built on and consolidated - fast.

Martina Weitsch

Martina Weitsch is a former QCEA Representative who, in retirement, is now able to engage in political advocacy at the national level in the UK (see rationaldebateblog.wordpress.com).
Imagine a British landscape with wild boar running through forests, wolves sleeping in the shade, and beaver dams scattered along rivers; it’s not too hard to conjure up. Perhaps you’re familiar with similar fauna in your own part of Europe. Or perhaps you’re thinking back to illustrations in history books which featured mammals like these. Now try to add elephants, bison or elk to the scene. It becomes more like something from a confused Hollywood film. “Elephants in Europe?” “Never!”

Yet these are possibilities that *Feral*, the latest work of renowned British environmentalist and journalist, George Monbiot, urges us to consider. Monbiot informs us that humans did indeed once share the European continent with such megafauna. And urges us not to rule out the idea that we could do so once again.

Controversial, maybe, but you might be pleased to hear that reintroducing elephants is not on Monbiot’s to-do list (he gives the possibility of their reintroduction a score of 2/10). These divisive ideas are voiced to capture our attention, inspire us, and get us talking and thinking about the concept of what he refers to as ‘rewilding’.

In the author’s own words, “rewilding, is about resisting the urge to control nature and allowing it to find its own way. It involves reintroducing absent plants and animals ... pulling down the fences, blocking the drainage ditches, but otherwise stepping back. The ecosystems that result are best described not as wilderness, but as self-willed: governed not by human management but by their own processes. Rewilding has no endpoints ... it does not strive to produce a heath, a meadow, a rainforest, a kelp garden or a coral reef. It lets nature decide.”

Monbiot uses his local setting, the Welsh mountains, as an example of an area that many view as unspoiled wilderness, despite the fact that the sparse landscape dominated by heather, gorse and sheep is actually a result of human management. Monbiot questions why we strive to conserve such artificial environments in their current state, rather than permitting the encroachment of natural woodland. He alerts us to ‘shifting baseline syndrome,’ suggesting that “the people of every generation perceive the state of the ecosystems they encountered in their childhood as normal.”

*Feral* highlights the numerous benefits that rewilding may bring to people: restoring nature’s natural balance can bring higher and healthier crop yields; increased vegetation can control flooding; and wild areas can fulfil our spiritual needs and provide employment from increased nature-based tourism. These are some of the numerous services that we derive from healthy, functioning ecosystems. Appropriate ways of valuing these ecosystem services is something that QCEA is currently investigating. (See our article ‘How to Value the Very Framework of Our Existence?’ in *Around Europe* 351, and look out for our ecosystem services briefing paper on our website). Monbiot discusses areas elsewhere in Europe, such as the Julian Alps in western Slovenia, that have been left to rewild and where, as a result, ecosystems and biodiversity have flourished, bringing a range of benefits to people, too.

There are, of course, also a number of criticisms of the rewilding approach. And whilst I initially feared that Monbiot was simply going to gloss over these, by the end of the book, each of my concerns had been addressed, if not entirely quashed.

In this well-researched and thoroughly readable piece of work, we are challenged not to think only about what we as environmentalists don’t want, but to voice what we do want: “positive environmentalism” as
Monbiot calls it. We are asked to consider questions such as: what are we conserving? The environment in its true state? Or the environment that we know and are familiar with? Why are we protecting it? And for whom?

According to Monbiot, some of the answers to these questions lie with the European Union’s biodiversity policies and its Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). He reminds us of certain follies of the CAP, such as “the infamous ‘50 trees’ guideline that ensures that pastures containing more than 50 trees per hectare are not eligible for funding.” And the fact that “the government of Northern Ireland has been fined £64 million for (among other such offences) giving subsidy money to farms whose traditional hedgerows are too wide.” Monbiot states that the one thing that farmers are not allowed to do, if they wish to gain subsidies, is let more than a tiny area of land return to its natural, diverse state.

George Monbiot laments the fact that many people see sparse, sheep-dotted landscapes, such as the one above, as good examples of wilderness.

Feral is written with a story-like narrative, and it is a story that begins with the search to overcome ‘ecological boredom.’ This is an unusual turn of phrase perhaps, but one that I think many of us can relate to: the need to satisfy that craving for being out in the wild, to capture that sense of fulfilment and peace that we can only experience when we dive into the sea, or watch tumbling waterfalls, or strive off the beaten track into the forest. Monbiot is reaching out to this inherent, spiritual connection between humans and nature. He does so with beautiful imagery: “the river was so clear that I could see the bottom, and the shadows of the fish which passed over it like unformed thoughts.” In this way, Feral is urging us to reconnect with nature, to remember that we are a part of it, and in doing so, to regain all that we are losing in only trying to control and manage it.

Bethany Squire

Feral. Searching for enchantment on the frontiers of rewilding.
George Monbiot
ISBN 978-1-846-14748-7
Published by Allen Lane: 2013, 316pp
£20 (Roughly €23.25)

Introducing Rebecca and Chris, the new QCEA PAs!

Chris Diskin will join QCEA in September 2013, after completing a range of internships in policy, public affairs and International Development. He holds a Masters Degree in Modern History from King’s College London, and he worked in a variety of roles at the Quaker centre Friends House, London, before arriving at QCEA.

Chris is looking forward to learning more about the work of Quakers at the European level, improving his French language skills, and experiencing Belgian culture. He is particularly interested in Democratic Governance as well as Economic and Social Justice.

Rebecca Viney-Woods writes: I am really looking forward to joining QCEA as a Programme Assistant, which will be a fantastic opportunity to express my spirituality through everyday action and also to work towards positive change in Europe. My passion for helping enact social change was ignited when I worked in children’s home in Pucallpa, Peru. I subsequently deepened my knowledge of contemporary political and social issues during my undergraduate degree in International History and Politics at the University of Leeds. In recent years, I have taken a proactive approach to instigating change by volunteering both locally and in East Africa.

My Quaker upbringing has significantly influenced my interest and understanding of social concerns. This led me to research the humanitarian work of the Friends War Victims Relief Committee during the early 20th century for my Masters degree in Modern History. I now welcome the chance to live and work alongside Quakers at the heart of European politics. I also hope to indulge my love of languages by improving my basic French and to take full advantage of the cultural experiences Brussels has to offer.
Then and Now: Human Well-being Instead of Poverty

Then: 1979

In one of the very first issues of Around Europe (AE No. 13, March 1979), the European Commission is quoted describing the benefits of the European Community: “Less preoccupied than national governments by short-term management problems, the Community is well-placed to take a long-term view of things.” The Treaty of Rome stated that the signatories had agreed that their main objective was to constantly improve the well-being (living and working conditions) of their citizens, and economic progress was described as worthwhile if it does more than increase consumerism but also improves the quality of life. Despite this, a 1977 survey (AE No. 20, November 1979) showed that a quarter of Europeans described their income as insufficient. The poor were defined as people whose income, goods, and support from public and private sources, were insufficient for the minimum acceptable lifestyle, taking into account exclusion from decent housing, cultural and social elements, and a poor environment. Only a few months later, in February 1980 (No. 22), unemployment is the front page story in Around Europe. Over 6 million were expected on the unemployment register, and up to 2/3 as many again (4 million) unemployed but not registering. A debate in the European Parliament was reported in AE covering issues ranging from investment and reducing working hours, to creating new jobs and growth.

Now: 2013

In 2013, the latest statistics (2011) show that it is still a quarter of Europeans who are at risk of poverty - now more than 120 million people. In 2011, nearly 9% of all Europeans were living in severe material deprivation - meaning that they did not have the resources to own a washing machine, a car, a telephone, to heat their homes, or cope with unexpected expenses. There are demonstrations against austerity measures in Southern Europe. Austerity has increased a pre-existing trend toward cutting social services, including those helping the homeless and protecting disabled European citizens. Let’s with this concept for a minute: imagine having nothing but one bag of belongings and no way to wash your feet. Is this human well-being?

One of the possible solutions being raised is the concept of a basic income: an income paid unconditionally to every citizen, on an individual basis, without a means test or work requirement, providing protection from the poverty trap and at least a fundamental assurance of housing and food.

Economic inequality is increasing in Europe. In Spain in 2009, the poorest 10% of the population had only 2% of the national income, and the richest 10% were taking home 25% of the national income. (Before those of us who are British become complacent, the numbers for the UK are similar.) By 2020, the EU aims to have 20 million fewer people at risk of poverty - that leaves 100 million still facing dire situations.

Quakers are among those around Europe (and elsewhere) beginning to ask about well-being, about the fact that the economy should serve people and not the other way around. Some ask, how can we build a just and sustainable economy which meets human needs without destroying the planet? The conventional economic model requires that there are people somewhere who accept small wages to stitch handbags, and that there are others who are purchasing more handbags than the one a person may actually need. We use natural resources to make these consumer goods, and greenhouse gases are emitted during their manufacture and transport. With a lack of essential resources for food and shelter, and in a changing climate, we are endangering everyone’s future - and especially that of the poor. In all the reiteration of a need for economic growth, we are forgetting the limitations of the planet and the importance of people’s well-being.

Alexandra Bosbeer and Gordon Matthews