



Around Europe

Quaker Council for European Affairs

No. 353 October-November 2013

Dutch Company Heeds Government Advice and Pulls out of Infrastructure Project Benefitting Illegal Settlements



An Israeli settlement (visible on the far hills) and infrastructure outside East Jerusalem, April 2012. Photo credit: Alan Whelan, CC

On 6 September 2013, Royal Haskoning DHV announced it was [terminating its involvement in the construction of a waste water treatment plant in East Jerusalem](#). The project was planned in Area C, part of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) which is under Israeli control. Some Dutch politicians had assumed that because the project was in Palestine, it would benefit Palestinians, and so criticized the advice from the Minister of Foreign Affairs that the area was occupied and that the Dutch Cabinet sees the Israeli settlements as unjust and an obstacle to peace which should not be supported by the activities of Dutch companies. However, despite the location, the [waste water being treated would not be from Palestinian villages. The Palestinian Authority points out that permits for sewage treatment for Palestinians have been denied, whereas this project would serve illegal Israeli settlements instead, therefore supporting the Israeli government's settlement policy. Joint projects have not been agreed.](#) And meanwhile the valley is quite polluted: waste water treatment is needed, but for all: not only for those living in illegal settlements.

Two Dutch members of parliament posed written questions to the Minister of Foreign Affairs postulating that stopping the project prevented some 200,000 people, mostly Palestinian, from accessing clean

drinking water, whereas the answer was that the project had not been designed to prepare the waste water for consumption as drinking water.

The decision of the Dutch company to act on the advice of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs follows [the courageous step of the EU to issue guidelines which reflect its oft-repeated view of the settlements](#), i.e. that they are illegal under international law and a major obstacle to peace in the Middle East. [The guidelines](#) restrict the eligibility of Israeli entities which operate in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for EU grants, prizes and financial

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instruments. They state simply that the EU does not recognise Israel's sovereignty over the West Bank including East Jerusalem, Golan Heights, or Gaza, and does not consider them to be part of Israel's territory. The response to these guidelines has been surprising. Illogical responses include claims that a refusal to support Israeli settlements in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights, necessarily means a person is against Israel or is anti-Jewish. Perhaps more surprising was US Secretary of State John Kerry urging EU Foreign Ministers to soften or retract the guidelines. "In the name of peace", he said. This is despite the fact that the precedents for the exclusion of the occupied territories in international agreements include one between the US and Israel (Bi-national Science Foundation in 1972). Fortunately, EU officials have reiterated to QCEA and other NGOs that the guidelines are an application of existing EU legislation and are therefore not subject to negotiations.

QCEA welcomes the way in which EU Member States' Foreign Ministers and the European External Action Service (EEAS), headed by Catherine Ashton, are maintaining their position in support of the guidelines which were drawn up by the European Commission in consultation with the EEAS. They may well have been encouraged to do so by letters written by Quakers in response to an action alert issued by QCEA. And those who responded to our action alert are not alone - Quaker Peace and Social Witness has called on UK Quakers to write to Catherine Ashton supporting the guidelines, and more than fifty Members of the European Parliament have also written to encourage

application of the guidelines. As MEP Emer Costello points out, the guidelines ensure that the EU upholds international law by not supporting the Israeli settlements that are in the Palestinian territory. It continues the EU's long-stated stance, that any changes to the territorial boundaries must be agreed by both parties. When they met in December 2012, the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the EU Member States published a summary of their conclusions that states: "The European Union reiterates that settlements are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace." Now is the time for peace between Israel and Palestine, they say.



Flags outside the European Commission, Berlaymont, Brussels
Photo credit:Wikimedia Commons, CC

Other national governments, besides the Dutch, have notified companies of the potential illegality of engaging in projects within the OPT. The German Minister for Transport, for example, wrote to German Railways in 2011 regarding a railway project that would cross the OPT: "I would

like to point out to you that, in terms of foreign policy, the Israeli state railroad project, crossing Israeli occupied territory, is a problematic venture and a potential violation of international law, touching on questions of status."

The use of money, investment, and support for business activities, are all areas where we can see our values in action. National governments clearly have a role in reminding businesses of their obligation to avoid transgressing human rights and to redress any negative impacts which their activities may have on human rights. States also have a responsibility to investigate and punish abuse of human rights by legal entities, including businesses.

Alexandra Bosbeer

Join in with the Action!

QCEA operates an e-mail action alert list, and all interested parties may sign up to it.

When an opportunity arises for advocacy with input from the public, QCEA sends an e-mail to those who have signed up to our action alert list. We might ask you to send a letter to a policy-maker or to respond to an EU consultation. We generally provide a model of the advocacy points QCEA is making on the topic, and you can use this or write your own submission.

Action alerts are issued on topics such as peace, criminal justice, the EU's role in Palestine/Israel, sustainability, and energy. You can sign up for one or more of the topics.

To sign up, send an e-mail to office@qcea.org with your name, your country of citizenship and residence, and the topics on which you'd like to receive action alerts. We look forward to hearing from you!

<http://www.qcea.org/home/involved/action-alerts/>



A Pledge for European Parliament Candidates: Stand for Human Rights

'That of God in everyone' is a Quaker conviction that implies that people should be respected and treated equally. This conviction was originally translated into social equality: Quakers became known for using the informal 'you' (thou) which existed in English until the 19th century and for [men refusing to remove their hats before people of higher class](#). Today many Quakers still do not use titles that denote status but simply the person's full name.

This conviction that people are equal doesn't sound so unfamiliar. Neither does the concept that people should have human rights. Human rights, the rule of law, and democracy are said to be the core values of the European Union. Despite this, some people - including some politicians - do not believe that human rights are universal. For example, some feel people get one chance to live life well, and that, if they are convicted of crimes, they should lose human rights. Others feel that being disabled, a woman, gay, or a certain ethnicity such as Roma, make a person



Greens/EFA MEPs protest the erosion of asylum seekers' basic rights in the European Parliament, June 12th 2013. Photo Credit: Greensefa, CC

ineligible for the same rights as others.

We do in fact treat people differently in different parts of the world: EU citizens are guaranteed [fundamental rights](#) such as rights to liberty and security, to just working conditions, and to freedom of thought. Although both the UK itself and the EU have

acceded to the [Council of Europe Convention on Human Rights](#), the [UK Prime Minister has suggested withdrawing](#) in order to be able to more easily deport people described as threatening the nation and its way of life. National security is used as a way for some states to excuse human rights violations, such as the use of threats and torture if the prisoner may hold information a government wishes to obtain in the name of protecting the security of its citizens.

The EU's [Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy](#) (adopted by the European Council in [June 2012](#)) addresses rights within and outside the EU. Sometimes coherence between

"You've just got to go to experience it"

- participant on QCEA's 2012 study tour

PRE-REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN FOR THE 2014 QCEA TOUR!

Come to Brussels and Strasbourg in spring 2014 to learn, discuss, and reflect on what Europe, the European Union and the Council of Europe mean to you! Visit various European Institutions in Brussels and meet with MEPs, officials of the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, the Council of Europe and NGOs.

The study tour is open to all who are over 18 who can handle a fair amount of walking. (Half the places in this pre-registration are reserved for young adults and half for not-so-young adults.)

"The Study Tour is a remarkable opportunity to see and access the institutions and buildings in Brussels and Strasbourg. The people we met involved in the Institutions or Parties brought over an exceptionally exclusive insight. To be accommodated by a faith-based NGO on the QCEA Study Tour did much for me."

For more information, see <http://www.qcea.org/home/events/study-tours/> or contact studytour@qcea.org.



'Human rights, the rule of law, and democracy are said to be the core values of the European Union'. Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons, CC

internal and external policies is lacking. An example is EU Member State ratification of the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT). Although ratification of the OPCAT is a prerequisite for third countries to engage with the EU, not all EU Member States have yet signed or ratified this protocol themselves. Increased coherence and a comprehensive internal human rights approach are needed.

In 2014, there will be elections for Members of the European Parliament. QCEA is participating in a campaign by the Human Rights and Democracy Network, asking candidates for the European Parliament to pledge to promote the EU's founding principles and the objectives of its human rights and democracy policy through their daily work in both internal and external affairs. The campaign will be launched in early November, and you will then be able to encourage your local candidates to sign the pledge via the website stand4humanrights.eu. Have a look - and encourage candidates to sign the pledge to promote the EU's founding principles of human rights and democracy!

Alexandra Bosbeer

QCEA is a member of the Human Rights and Democracy Network. See <http://www.hrdn.eu/> for an HRDN statement on strengthening the EU's response to human rights abuses within its own borders.

To find out more and to see if your local candidate for European Parliament has signed the pledge, visit stand4humanrights.eu

A Human Rights Manifesto for the European Parliament

A strengthened approach to human rights is needed if European Parliament activities on human rights and democracy are to become more visible, coherent and consistent, and thus more influential on EU policy and on the world stage. The Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN) therefore calls on all candidates in the 2014 European Elections to adhere to the manifesto below.

If I am elected in the 2014 European Elections I pledge to:

Promote the EU's founding principles and the objectives of its human rights and democracy policy through my daily work in all Parliamentary committees and delegations, dealing with both internal and external affairs

Publicly and privately raise human rights abuses and cases of individuals at risk in plenary and committee/delegation meetings, with EU officials, EU Member States, EU national parliamentarians and with the countries concerned and through initiating resolutions, statements and letters

Regularly meet with NGOs and human rights defenders in Brussels and Strasbourg, in my home country and on my visits to other countries

Support the improvement of the Parliament's work on human rights and democracy to actively support structural reform including the upgrading of the current Sub-Committee on Human Rights (DROI) to a fully-fledged committee; for all Committees and Delegations to task a Vice Chair with a specific responsibility for human rights and to reform the "urgencies" (rule 122) procedure

Improve transparency within the Parliament and within other EU institutions to ensure a public record on all votes on human rights issues, for all high level EP positions to be appointed in a transparent manner and for hearings with EU officials to be held in public

.....
Signature



Then and Now: The Trade of Arms from European Countries

As the peace testimony is a key element of Quakerism, many Quakers have a strong interest in promoting international peace. Thirty years ago, QCEA was calling for a reduction of arms sales from European countries. Some progress has been made: in 2008, European Union Member States adopted the legally binding [Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP of 8 December 2008](#) defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment, which prevents the sales of arms from Member States to countries that do not respect human rights.

1978: 'European Merchants of Death'

In October 1978, the British Socialist Member of European Parliament (MEP) Robert Edwards declared that 'by selling arms to the poorest countries in the world, we [Europeans] have become the merchants of death'. Edwards made this bold statement during a European Economic Community (EEC) policy debate on 'arms sales to areas of tension' (see *Around Europe*, No. 9 October 1978).

In the late 1970s, the trade of arms from Europe to countries such as [Iraq, India, and Libya](#) had been growing steadily. During the 1978 EEC policy debate, British Conservative MEP Tom Normanton noted that the arms trade was an important way for Western European states to wield influence in a polarised world. However, Irish Christian Democrat MEP Gerald Lestrane argued that the dangers of an 'uncontrolled' trade of arms were evident in conflicts such as Northern Ireland, where many light weapons imported from other countries were causing injury and death. European states were not dominant suppliers to the factions involved in the Northern Irish conflict. However, Lestrane stated that the violence, which [claimed over 1,980 lives in the decade ending 1978](#), demonstrated the need for more coordinated arms policies between EEC member states.

1980 and 1982: Embargo on Arms Trade

In the early 1980s, [France, Britain, and the Federal Republic of Germany](#) were amongst the top five global exporters of arms, predominantly to the Middle East. In June 1980, *Around Europe* urged readers to support a resolution on 'trade in arms, munitions and military equipment' put forward by an independent group of MEPs. The resolution called for an immediate embargo on all exports and sales of arms to countries whose governments did not respect human rights. The progress of the resolution was ended in October 1980 when the Political Affairs Committee of the European Parliament declared itself 'incompetent' to deal with the motion for the resolution.

Around Europe continued to discuss the need for restrictions in the arms trade. In 1982, British Conservative MEP Adam Ferguson published a report which named Member States engaged in arms manufacturing and exporting. The report outlined the need for a common EU policy on arms sales, as previously advocated by QCEA. It called for a resolution in which Member States agreed on fundamental principles governing arms exports to third countries. The report was due to be discussed in the [November 1982 session of the European Parliament](#) (see *Around Europe*, No. 49 October 1982). However, the report is not shown on the agenda for that session of the European Parliament, and its suggestions regarding the trade of arms from Europe were presumably not adopted.

Now: Arms and Militarisation

Today, trading arms remains a controversial topic, particularly when this trade involves nations that have political systems and policies at odds with the EU's core values. The European Commission's Office for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy claims that engagement, including trading weapons, provides an opportunity for potentially positive economic and democratic influence. More importantly in terms of the arms trade, it is also still argued that engagement allows the EU and EU Member State governments to maintain some form of supply control, limiting the quantity and sophistication of weapons available. However, the supply of any arms to non-democratic nations, dictatorships, and aggressive regimes still raises ethical concerns.

Ongoing conflicts in the Middle East provide clear illustrations of such concerns. At an emergency meeting of the EU Foreign Affairs Council in August



Egyptian citizens blocking the 6th of October Bridge in Cairo during uprisings on 25th January 2013
Photo credit: Gigi Ibrahim, CC



2013, [EU Member State foreign ministers agreed to halt export licenses](#) for arms to Egypt after more than 600 people were killed in violent clashes between the army and supporters of the ousted President Morsi. However, when arms have already been supplied, the damage may be done, as in this situation where hundreds had already died. Another recent example is the supply of chemical weapon components to the Syrian government. There is little that the supplier can do once their products are in the hands of the purchaser. Confiscation of arms takes time, it requires international agreement, and it may require an armed force beyond the current capacity of the EU.

The very purpose of these weapons is to kill and injure people, and perhaps those nations supplying arms should not be surprised when purchasers use them against a different group from the assumed target (i.e. military personnel).

In 2010, QCEA criticised the EU for its lack of regulation and transparency in the arms trade, particularly with regard to its dealings with Israel. In a [briefing paper](#) we recommended that member states should implement both the letter and spirit of the 2008 Common Position on the arms trade, making it clearer as to which nations receive arms manufactured in the EU. This would increase transparency, allowing observer to ensure the 2008 Common Position is being implemented by Member States, thereby helping to prevent illicit arms trading.

The European Commission is continuing to increase its support for the arms trade (see [Around Europe, No.350 April-May 2013](#)). The 'Defence Industries Task Force' (part of the Commission) is widely expected by a range of commentators to recommend ending national defence monopolies and the opening up of EU funding for defence projects. They are also likely to advocate the promotion of drones and space imaging.

This suggests that the EU is developing its arms manufacturing and trading, rather than its peacebuilding initiatives. The EU is expanding its military capacity through economies of scale and producing more weaponry. There is simultaneously a lack of transparency regarding arms sales, particularly regarding which nations receive European arms, and which weapons they can purchase. There is also little public dialogue on the subject: governments are neither consulting with nor informing the citizens they represent.

Militarisation of the EU is a contemporary theme, with national armed forces co-operating more regularly and on a larger scale both through the EU and through bilateral agreements between member states. EU Member States are currently trying to strike a balance between retaining what they perceive to be adequate defence forces (though the word 'adequate' is difficult to define), and cutting military expenditure at a time of economic recession. Sharing responsibilities and tactical knowledge, as well as the integration of military forces, are proposed by some EU Member States as a way to achieve this balance. For example the Weimar Triangle (Germany, Poland and France) have outlined their desire to pool and share military resources. However, it could also be argued that the use of the EU as a forum for military cooperation is very much at odds with the original purpose of the EU: peace.

There is a clear increase in militarisation of the European Union (see [Around Europe, No.350 April-May 2013](#)). It is an increase that should cause concern and make people consider the purpose of the European Union: a community working together to create a more understanding environment or a group of states looking to arm themselves for conflicts and threats they do not yet understand nor can predict? This question should perhaps be asked more widely by EU citizens.

Chris Diskin and Rebecca Viney-Wood

QUAKER HOUSE NEWS



L to R: Chris V, Bethany, Imogen, Rebecca, Chris D. Photo credit: Alexandra Bosbeer.

18 August: Chris Venables spoke to Stafford Quaker Meeting (UK) about his work at QCEA.

29 August: A new QCEA briefing paper was published on 'how to get involved' with the EU institutions, written by Martina Weitsch (see her post-retirement blog at <http://rationaldebateblog.wordpress.com/>)

Early September: a number of Friends responded to a QCEA action alert asking EU Member State Ministers of Foreign Affairs to avoid softening the guidelines on Israel's borders.

5 September: a human rights QCEA briefing paper was published on shrinking civil society. (see <http://www.qcea.org/2013/09/briefing-paper-shrinking-civil-space-in-european-countries/>)

16 September: Chris D and Rebecca, our new Programme Assistants, start their induction weeks at QCEA, with the help of outgoing PAs Chris V and Bethany.



Speaking About the Quaker Voice: What QCEA Means to Me

For the last 18 months I have been Clerk of the British Committee of QCEA. I was delighted to be asked to take this role - committee chair, process facilitator, record-keeper combined - as it appeals so much to my own long-held enthusiasm for Europe. I believe in the idea of a common European home for the citizens of the EU Member States. I believe the ideals that motivated the founders of what is now the EU - solidarity, subsidiarity, security, justice, liberty, and equality of opportunity, all informed in part by Catholic social teaching - are almost more relevant now than they were after the Second World War. I believe the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the EU was a genuine and deserved recognition of the EU's achievement of its founders' ambitions. The EU's successes immensely outweigh its failures. The institutions need to be questioned and held to account regularly. But they should be valued and celebrated as well.

I've been a Quaker for around six years. I was involved in peacebuilding and promotion of sustainable development for my local meeting (including collecting responses from Quakers nationally to consultation on the then-government's climate change bill), and I discovered QCEA quite soon after becoming a member. I've always been a convinced European: the first time I ever voted was in the referendum on UK entry to the EU. I studied languages at university, and I have lived and worked in several different countries. I was a UK civil servant for ten years and was a member of UK delegations dealing with issues like employment and vocational training. I worked in the German Federal Labour Office and trained at the École Nationale d'Administration in Paris. For the last twenty years I've been a freelance trainer, facilitator and coach for all sorts of organisations, with a preference for the public and NGO sectors, and a love for working with people from different cultures. So it seemed natural for me to ask to join the British Committee of QCEA - I felt drawn to the core concerns at the heart of QCEA's advocacy work, and I know a lot about how the EU works.

The British Committee's key roles are fundraising for QCEA, and promotion of QCEA's work in particular as well as the European context in which it operates. We have had much success over recent years in seeking and securing legacies, trust funding, and donations from individuals and Quaker meetings, and we want to build on this. There are more Quakers in the UK than

in any other EU country, and we know the potential for more fundraising is there. But it depends on people knowing more about the issues they're asked to support. As I write this, I know that at least three members of the British Committee have been making presentations about the work of QCEA to local Quaker groups. The opportunity for this often comes as part of the weekly charitable appeal that Quaker meetings have.

Increasingly, though, people are curious about QCEA and want to know more about how Quakers can have a voice in Europe. The lack of education and information



View of St Paul's Cathedral from Millennium Bridge, London. Photo credit: Peter Reid

UK citizens receive about the work of the EU is an opportunity for myths and disinformation to spread. So, I believe our key role as the British Committee is to help Quakers at least in Britain have the knowledge and awareness to be part of QCEA's quest to speak truth to power. QCEA is a small organisation that continues to be very influential - look at the recent European Commission and Parliament decisions on distinctions between Israeli and Settlement

products for an example. To ordinary citizens, the EU sometimes appears to be a machine that we cannot influence. QCEA and its allies in Europe have shown this is not the case.

There is now a rising tide of Euroscepticism in the UK: a minor political party has hijacked the democratic process and declared that the European parliament elections in 2014 will be a de facto in/out referendum, and the government seems to be going along with this. Quakers are starting to be concerned about the European Union, and are asking for knowledge. What is the decision-making process in the EU? What are the key issues where QCEA can have an influence, and how does it do this? How do I find out enough to know what I'm voting for in the European elections? I'm certain that people who know the answers to these questions will spread the knowledge to their friends, family, neighbours and colleagues, that the awareness will grow, and that democracy will be the better for it.

Peter Reid

Peter Reid is a British Quaker who serves as Clerk of the QCEA British Committee (UK Registered Charity 293776). To contact British Committee to arrange a presentation at your Meeting or organization, or to make a donation, e-mail treasurer Simon Bond at Simon@armitage.biz



Missing the QCEA/QPSW Joint Conference on Europe and Economic Justice?

The QCEA/QPSW 2013 conference is fully booked! If you've missed signing up but are curious about what we all can do about economic justice, here are some suggested readings:

Wilkinson, R and Pickett, K. (2010). *The spirit level: Why equality is better for everyone* (London: Penguin Books Ltd.)

European Commission (2013). Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament and the European Council: *Strengthening the social dimension of the economic and monetary union*. COM (2013) 690 provisoire (02/10/2013) (http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/president/news/archives/2013/10/pdf/20131002_1-emu_en.pdf)

EuroMemorandum (2013). The deepening crisis in the European Union: The need for a fundamental change (http://www.euromemo.eu/euromemorandum/euromemorandum_2013/index.html)

Jackson, T. (2009). Prosperity without growth? The transition to a sustainable economy. The Sustainable Development Commission (http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/data/files/publications/prosperity_without_growth_report.pdf)

Lunn, P. 2011 Swarthmore Lecture: Costing not less than everything: Sustainability and spirituality in challenging times.

(<http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/publications.php?action=publication&id=80>)

Seeger, D.A. (2007). Commerce, community, and the regulations of universal love: The contemporary relevance of John Woolman's essay "A plea for the poor"

(http://universalistfriends.org/printable/seeger07_printable.html)

Keep an eye out for videos of the conference keynotes on the QCEA website at www.qcea.org!



Jenny Bolliger

We Have a New Volunteer in our Israel/Palestine Project!

Having worked for the observer and advocacy program (EAPPI) of the World Council of Churches in Palestine/Israel, Jenny Bolliger has great knowledge of the Middle East. Originally from Switzerland, Jenny is now working as a program manager in Brussels. She has spent a good deal of time listening to the perspectives of both Palestinians and Israelis in order to bring a human angle of that conflict to people in Europe. She is keen to volunteer for Quaker concerns and support advocacy activities in the heart of Europe.



Around Europe

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Around Europe is designed using the open-source desktop publishing software Scribus.

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