Teach peace
Create dialogue
Offer sanctuary

Asylum applications fall – but migrants continue to drown

QCEA makes its voice heard at new Paris Peace Forum

Helping the Helpers: an update from our trauma project
On 25 October, the European Parliament agreed a resolution expressing its concern at “the increasing normalisation of fascism, racism and xenophobia,” calling on EU member states to ban neo-fascist and neo-Nazi groups in a text which passed with 355 votes to 90. Citing several examples of extreme-right violence in recent years – including the murder of British MP Jo Cox – as well as the effective “impunity” of neo-fascist groups in many EU member states, the resolution also calls for better historical education about the dangers of fascism in response to the phenomenon. It also suggested the creation of “exit programmes” to help people move away from extremist political groups.

Meanwhile, according to official figures from the European Statistical Office and the European Asylum Support Office, the numbers of migrants applying for asylum in the EU, Norway and Switzerland has fallen to levels similar to those before the ‘peak’ recorded in 2015. In that year roughly 1.4 million people asked for asylum, compared to roughly 406,000 so far in 2018. However, the proportion of people drowning while attempting to reach Europe’s shores has risen dramatically: in 2017, one in every 42 migrants (2.4%) crossing the Central Mediterranean died en route, compared to one in 18 this year (just under 6%). This is the terrible human cost of the continuing “Fortress Europe” policy which has been progressively put in place since 2015 (see page 3).

The Italian Institute for International Political Studies states that increased patrols, as well as strict border control arrangements with Libyan authorities, have pushed people smugglers to take ever greater risks in attempting to ship people to Europe – with deadly results.

Here at QCEA, we’ve been speaking out about the rise of neo-fascist groups for over twenty-five years. In 1993, we published Between Hope and Disaster, a report into nascent extreme-right groups which were emerging across Europe at the time. We also introduced a resolution condemning the rise of neo-fascism at the Council of Europe’s NGO assembly.
The price of Fortress Europe

Europe's policies have consequences. It is becoming increasingly clear who is paying the price for the methods of reducing migration from the Mediterranean.

Thousands of people, mainly children and young adults, are detained in horrendous conditions in Libya. Amnesty International have found that people in detention are routinely exposed to torture, rape, beatings, extortion, starvation, forced labour and other abuse. This matches accounts given by people on the move directly to QCEA staff.

European governments are equipping, training and supporting the Libyan Coast Guard to intercept people at sea and create obstacles for maritime rescue. When people are caught they are taken to one of twenty-six active detention centres partly funded by national contributions to an EU Trust Fund (identified through an investigation by the Guardian newspaper in November 2018).

There is no way to count the exact numbers in detention. Amnesty International estimate there were 4,400 people detained in March 2018 and 10,000 in July. The UNHCR estimate 5,400 people, but acknowledge this does not include people detained by traffickers.

Information is very scarce. Phones are banned and talking to outsiders is severely punished. One survivor interviewed by Amnesty said he had already been moved between eight detention centres and he “would rather die than go back”. Reports of self-harm include a Somali man who died in October after setting himself on fire, and since then an Eritrean has attempted suicide in the same centre.

A 13 year old Eritrean boy in detention near Tripoli told a Guardian investigator that people were given very little food, disease was widespread, and many only had one t-shirt and a pair of shorts and are suffering from cold as winter sets in. A 17 year old Eritrean boy who escaped Libya and received an expert medical examination was found to have fifty torture scars on his body – a result of violence alleged to be from both detention centre staff and traffickers. QCEA staff have heard similar accounts from people formerly detained in Libya, some with significant scarring.

A 16 year old boy told a Guardian investigator, “We are dying and no-one is taking responsibility … We are locked in twenty-four hours a day. We do not see sunrise. We do not see sunset.” The UK (with a population of 67 million) is sticking firmly to its policy, having only resettled 417 children from conflict zones in the last two years. Other European governments are showing similar disregard for this problem.

Wherever you live, please write to your parliamentary representatives and forward any replies to the QCEA team at Quaker House Brussels.

ENVIRONMENT NEWS

Sustainability: two steps forward, one step back

In the wake of public concern over single-use plastics and their effects on ocean life, the European Parliament backed plans to tackle plastic pollution in October. In addition to approving the European Commission’s plans, MEPs also voted to add polystyrene food containers to a list of banned items which already included plastic cutlery and drinks stirrers, among others. The Parliament also decided to compel producers of such products to pay towards clean-up, despite behind-the-scenes lobbying against the proposals by the likes of Coca-Cola, Nestlé and Danone.

In less positive news, the Parliament has “missed its opportunity” to stop over-fishing in the Adriatic Sea, approving new fishing quotas which go well beyond scientific recommendations for sustainable limits. The decision, taken in November, also fails to introduce any measures to limit the impacts of fishing activities on the marine environment. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) called the plans “extremely disappointing.”

With elections approaching in May, the last large environmental item on the agenda looks set to be deforestation. An EU-funded study published in March found that the Union is a major contributor to the loss of forests and set out possible policy options to address the problem. Danish environment minister Jakob Ellemann-Jensen has written to the European Commission requesting that they produce concrete proposals on deforestation as soon as possible.

WHY IS QCEA TALKING ABOUT THIS?

Sustainability used to be part of our work programme here at QCEA, although we’ve refocused our activities in recent years to concentrate on peace and human rights. However, the environment has long been a Quaker concern and the EU plays a major role in the rules designed to protect it. As such, we feel it’s important to keep you updated on major developments in Brussels.
From 11-13 November, world leaders, academics, peacebuilding organisations and businesses gathered in Paris for the first Paris Peace Forum, and QCEA's Peace Programme Lead Olivia Caeymaex was there.

Among the many notable speakers at the Forum was this year's Nobel Peace Prize winner Nadia Murad, an Iraqi Yazidi who was enslaved by the so-called Islamic State group before escaping in late 2014. After a period in a refugee camp she eventually reached Germany, where she became an activist for human rights and a campaigner against sexual violence.

One of the common messages which emerged at the event was the need for a whole-of-society approach to conflict prevention. This mirrors the advocacy QCEA is undertaking for nonviolent security policy, including through our publication Building Peace Together. Indeed, it's becoming increasingly clear that our Quaker-inspired perspective on peace and conflict is gaining traction at the global level.

Following the Forum, Olivia was interviewed by Radio France International, where she once again made the case for peacebuilding which incorporates multiple areas of policy, such as education. Marc Reverdin, the General Secretary of the Forum, thanked her for the "excellent presentation" and promised that next year's event would address these concerns.

See Olivia's radio interview in full at bit.ly/2FpjPi9
Since 1979, the Quaker Council for European Affairs has worked to bring a vision based on the Quaker commitment to peace, justice and equality to Europe and its institutions.

Anti-migrant police violence close to home

One in four recent migrants in Belgium are victims of police violence. That’s the worrying statistic which emerges from a new report by the Belgian NGO Médecins du Monde, based on interviews of 440 migrants undertaken earlier this year. Aside from violence against the person, many of those interviewed made allegations of destruction of property and humiliation by police officers – corroborating claims heard by QCEA staff. Ri De Ridder, President of the NGO, reported that violence took place at all stages of police interventions, from immigration raids to detention, and argued that it was the natural consequence of the “useless and harmful ‘migrant hunt’” being led by Belgium’s federal government. This study follows several reports on police violence toward migrants in Calais, including one by the French government themselves.

In early 2019, QCEA will be developing a multilingual pamphlet which will be distributed among migrants, police and security forces and NGOS to build awareness of what European law says on the subject of police violence. The idea is to help new arrivals to better understand their rights and for officials to better understand their responsibilities.

Improving women’s representation in Brussels

As one of the primary centres of international diplomacy, Brussels plays host to tens of thousands of conferences and policy discussions every year. However, women rarely feature as speakers at such events, an ongoing problem with which the European political community continues to struggle. According to Closing the Gender Gap – a new study by the Open Society European Policy Institute – foreign policy-related events are the worst offenders, with men representing 82% of speakers on panels.

For our part, QCEA makes a conscious effort to host inclusive discussions and we adhere to the principle of “no women, no panel.” On 22-23 November, we also hosted a policy forum on women in peace and security, bringing together academics and policymakers to discuss shortcomings both in the EU’s work on gender and conflict, as well as academic research in this field.

Towards an Inclusive Peace and Security was co-organised with the Gendering EU Studies Research Network, bringing together the Universities of Newcastle and Amsterdam, among others.

Virtual Meeting for Worship to mark moment of Brexit

QCEA is inviting Friends and Meetings to take part in a Europe-wide online Meeting for Worship, which will take place at the time of the expected departure of the UK from the European Union.

As you may have seen, QCEA will be running a Study Tour of the European institutions during the week in which the UK looks set to formally leave the EU. As part of this, tour participants will be holding a Meeting for Worship in Quaker House Brussels at the exact time Brexit occurs (11pm UK time on Friday 29 March, midnight in Brussels).

We want to open this up to all Friends: those who wanted to take part in the tour but couldn’t, those wanting to mark Brexit for whatever reason, and those who would like to feel a connection to Quakers across Europe at this time. While attenders will be dispersed across the continent, we hope that we be together in spirit. All that’s needed to take part is an internet connection. Keep an eye on Around Europe and our social media pages for more info on how to join.

From the agenda

- **16 October** QCEA took part in a series of events at the Sapienza University of Rome and the Italian Parliament. The events focused on the 300th anniversary of the death of William Penn, but gave QCEA prominent opportunities to talk about our work, including Quaker perspectives on #SanctuaryEverywhere and #RethinkingSecurity.

- **15 November** Policymakers, experts and interested members of the public took part in an event aimed at finding opportunities for peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). A particular focus was on the matter of cobalt and other "conflict minerals" – natural resources extracted in an area of violent conflict and traded in ways that perpetuate the violence.

- **19 November** Rutgers University scholar Andrew R. Murphy has written a new biography of William Penn, **William Penn – A Life**, which had its European launch at Quaker House. We were joined by the author as well as former MEP Andrew Duff, who gave an inspiring talk on Penn’s influence as an early European federalist. The book is out now.
teaching peace

Peaceful, tolerant societies begin in the classroom. The EU should invest in the peace education which Quakers have practised for centuries.

Everybody understands that education is about equipping people with the skills they need to thrive, and to make a contribution to wider society. However, for too many people – and too many policymakers – this understanding is limited to things like English and maths. But what about other skills such as communication or cultural literacy, or values such as tolerance and mutual respect? These can be of as great a use to learners and their communities, particularly in a post-conflict context.

The idea that sustainable peace can be encouraged via how and what we learn is known as peace education. This concept is nothing new to Quakers, who run Friends Schools around the world according to this very principle. A Quaker education seeks to instil the values of community, responsibility and tolerance in the hope that students will become “effective citizens” equipped to help “mend the affairs of humanity” through their actions.

Peace education is not a rigid framework or set of curriculum guidelines. Rather, it's a way of approaching teaching which is defined by its human-centred ethos and emphasis on creating well-rounded learners. It can take many forms and many names – you may remember taking civics or moral education classes in your school days, for example.

As a concept, it has grown and evolved through the years, influenced by the social and political context of the time. (Indeed, that's one of the strengths of peace education). In any case, evidence shows that it can have a transformative impact in places where some or all of its approaches are applied, especially against a backdrop of recent conflict or community tensions.

As such, QCEA's Peace Programme believes that the EU should consider making the tenets of peace education part of its global security and conflict prevention strategies. In our Building Peace Together publication we have already made the case for a whole-of-society approach to peacebuilding, in which things like education and cultural policy are given equal consideration to more “traditional” conflict resolution tools. Now we want to encourage the EU to put the theory into practice by supporting peace education through policy, programming and funding, and we're currently undertaking a research project that will be the basis for advocacy work to that effect.

WHY THE EU?

As the EU is one of the leading international donors and has institutions with both external and internal mandates, it has a unique opportunity to support peace education, both inside its borders and around the world.

Historically, the EU has promoted education through funding for programmes such as Erasmus+, an academic exchange system with which university students will be familiar. The EU has long touted these initiatives as far more than purely academic, emphasising the fraternity and cooperation which they build across European cultures. Clearly, the EU believes in education in the service of peace – a sound basis for building a cohesive, coordinated strategy to that end.
WHY NOW?

Recent security challenges highlight the timeliness of such a strategy. Following terror attacks in Copenhagen and Paris in 2015, European education ministers met in Paris to discuss how education and training can address social exclusion – considered a root cause of violent extremism. The 2015 Paris Declaration that the education ministers signed contained the message that education should also “help young people – in close cooperation with parents and families – to become active, responsible, open-minded members of society.” Since signing the declaration, concrete steps have been taken by the EU, such as the launching of a Working Group on Promoting Citizenship and Common Values. This shows how security challenges have not only sparked renewed attention in peace education, but have also been a catalyst for action.

But it’s not just in Europe that policymakers are signing up to the principles of peace education. The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals include calls for assurances that “all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development,” including education which promotes a culture of peace and nonviolence.

In a period of global tension, inequality and increasing polarisation, equipping young people with the capacity to interact and engage across cultures and communities has real benefits for stability and security both here and around the world. Such skills not only create societies which are more resilient in the face of conflict, but can help with post-conflict recovery too.

WHAT QCEA IS DOING

Our research, which will be published shortly, aims to make a solid, evidence-based case for peace education as a policy. In the following months we will work with different EU-level stakeholders, using the report to introduce them to these ideas and encourage their uptake in policy, programming and funding. Crucially, we believe the EU should adopt a multi-layered approach which embraces the principles of peace education across its institutions and areas of work – no element of peacebuilding is effective in isolation.

QCEA’s report will provide:

- examples of what peace education looks like,
- a brief history, showing how peace education has evolved in response to different political contexts, such as denuclearisation,
- Quaker work on formal and non-formal peace education around the world,
- forms of peace education promoted by the EU,
- a case study of EU and civil society peace education activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and
- recommendations for implementing a multi-layered approach to peace education.

The EU has already made positive steps towards embracing peace education, and we believe there is potential for deeper coordination around a multi-layered approach to peace education in Europe. QCEA will work to help make that happen.

Quaker education

Quakers have a rich history of education based on the principles of peace and equality. Peace education “and a life turned toward service in the world” has long been part of Quaker schooling.

The first such primary and secondary schools were set up in the United Kingdom and later in the United States, where Quakers implemented early forms of multicultural and interfaith education. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Quakers helped set up peace programmes at universities such as at Bradford University in the UK and Colgate University in the United States.

Today, Quaker and Quaker-inspired schools exist worldwide, including in Costa Rica, Jamaica, Rwanda, and Palestine. In Kenya, Quaker secondary schools developed a Curriculum for Peace and Conflict Management in response to election violence in 2007-8 – exactly the kind of initiative which we believe the EU should be helping to mainstream in conflict contexts worldwide.

Pupils from the Friends School in Ramallah, Palestine.

PHOTOS: FRIENDS UNITED MEETING (CC)
In Europe, there has been compelling evidence of the growth of unacceptable patterns of hate speech. In the context of increased migration to Europe, narratives which dehumanise or incite violence against refugees and migrants have found their way into the political discourse—and the media has often, voluntarily or involuntarily, fanned these flames.

Hate speech is defined by the Council of Europe as “all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance”. Hate speech is dangerous because it influences people to condone and commit violence against members of the targeted group. It can openly call for violence or portray the group in a way that makes violence against it seem justified.

Hate speech can incite violence by dehumanising the target group, accusing them of plotting to hurt the audience, or by suggesting that their presence is an existential threat to the audience. European history is a testament to where hateful narratives can lead if left unchecked.

In advance of next year’s European elections, QCEA is concerned about an amplification of hateful anti-migrant narratives, notably online. Laws, policies and standards are not enough and purely political responses to this problem could be seen as censorship.

That is why developing positive counter-narratives is important. We need to reframe the public discussion, discrediting and deconstructing hateful narratives in favour of a more positive discourse which reinforces the values of human rights, openness, equality, and appreciation of diversity.

“When asked how to respond to oppressive narratives, some would say: just don’t! ‘Responding’ to a narrative means implicitly accepting and reinforcing the narrative frame sustaining the oppressive narrative. So, what is a better strategy to undermine an oppressive narrative? It might sound tautological, but to counter a narrative [we need] another narrative, a challenging narrative, or a counter-narrative and a new narrative altogether.”

WE CAN!
Council of Europe campaign against hate speech
How do we craft a counter-narrative?

Avoid adversarial or divisive language
Don’t counter hate with hate. Stay positive. Show solidarity with victims of hate without attacking the instigators.

Research your audience
Research how your audience interacts online. Learn from propagators of hate speech to see what platforms and content are effective in reaching them. Be specific, and keep in mind how their demographic consumes information. Try to understand their personal context.

Base your response on credible sources and research
The basis for any sound rebuttal is empirical evidence which proves your point. Seeing the facts won’t convince committed xenophobes, but it can be a powerful influence on those whose views are based on fear rather than dogma. There’s plenty of evidence out there – indeed, QCEA is working on making some of it even more accessible.

Work together
Social media might enable hate speech to spread, but it also allows us to come together and organise in efforts to create healthier conversations and more welcoming communities. In many countries, grassroots initiatives already exist which aim to counter anti-migrant online discourse in exactly the ways outlined here. A good example is the Swedish #jagärhar movement, which consists of thousands of volunteers who respond to hateful comments en masse.

Appeal to emotions and values
You should use facts and credible sources to back up your narrative, but research has shown that numbers alone are not effective. Your narrative should also connect to your audience on an emotional, personal level. Use examples or comparisons with which they may relate in order to change their perspective and create new, positive meanings. This can be done through humour or satire or through telling human stories.

QCEA’s recent report on anti-migrant hate speech has a list of similar groups. Why not find one where you are? To read the report, visit bit.ly/2KrKRv2

Some things to consider

DO change the conversation
Offer positive statements instead of negative ones. For example, if someone says “migrants are lazy”, you can offer examples of stories about migrants working hard. If someone blames a group for causing certain societal issues because of their ethnicity or religion, you can offer alternative explanations such as economic reasons for these issues.

DON’T threaten or blame
Instead offer rewards for positive actions such as value, pride, and social recognition.

DON’T maintain oppressive frameworks
For example, when you encounter economic arguments like “they burden our welfare system”, don’t respond with: “migrants can help with the ageing European demography.” Although this statement may be true, it reinforces an idea that migrants are a necessary evil as opposed to a genuine positive. Also, evaluating people according to their socio-economic contribution is counter to the human rights narrative.

DON’T ignore context or identity
Take into account your audience’s fears and anxieties about things like unemployment, and don’t dismiss the importance of national or local identity for many people. Respond to a need for belonging by crafting new identities based around an alternate narrative of peace and inclusivity.

DO correct misconceptions about perceived social norms
People may believe that they know what most people in their group think. You can prove that those norms are not as prevalent as they imagine. People who profess to belong to a “silent majority” may be disproven by the results of a simple poll.

DO screen each message for risk
Make sure your messages don’t backfire: try to avoid language or arguments which people may use to justify their own hateful narratives.
Helping the Helpers has selected the participants for our pilot project. We had 23 applications, interviewed 16 people and found 10 who met our profile. One of those had to drop out, and so we met with 9 Helpers. They come originally from Turkey, Palestine, Singapore, Australia, the UK, Belgium, Algeria and Rwanda. They work in Greece, France, the UK, Ireland and Turkey.

Structure of the project
The participants will meet face-to-face three times over the course of the year, for intensive residential training. Between these sessions, they will meet with our psychotherapists monthly to discuss specific opportunities they have had to apply the skills they have learned. It is hoped that these monthly sessions will help to ensure that the skills learned in the residential sessions can be applied in the daily work of our Helpers.

First residential institute
The group met with the organisers for the first time at La Foresta near Brussels, for a five-day institute. During that time, they were introduced to a variety of topics, including:

- Bio-Psycho-Social Health
- Primary, secondary and vicarious trauma
- Mind/body connection with respect to trauma
- Social safety and support systems
- Personal and professional boundaries
- Practical tools to address trauma:
  - Cognitive behavioural techniques
  - Narrative techniques
  - Breathing techniques
Helping the Helpers is a project which addresses the needs of volunteers who serve refugees and migrants, with a view to enabling them to avoid the long-term effects of vicarious and secondary trauma.

What the participants say about the training

This week I have had the opportunity to learn alongside some of the most resilient and inspiring international humanitarian workers in a converted monastery in the forests of Belgium. We have been studying psychosocial support and therapy theory to help refugees and volunteers suffering from secondary and vicarious trauma. Sometimes there is no light at the end of the tunnel when working in humanitarian crises, and most of the time you can feel very alone. Exhaustion, trauma, depression, guilt and confusion and just some of the emotions that you can exposed to. Helping the Helpers is an organisation which supports humanitarian aid workers in their work. This is a year long programme with study, reading and residential study. Excited doesn’t even begin to describe my feelings. – Gabrielle

Step by step

You may remember from our first newsletter that Michelle Mildener offered to do a sponsored walk to raise money for HTH. Over the weekend of Sept 8/9 she walked the 60 km from Brussels to Ghent, and in doing so raised just over 1000 Euros for HTH. We thank her for her amazing effort.

Jeannette Delgado-Holdsworth

As a Quaker I try to live my life according to my Quaker values and this is partly why I joined the group working on the project.

As a psychotherapist, I see how much hurt we humans cause each other and I see my job as enabling others to overcome their hurt/pain so that they can become the person they want to become and have the tools to help them face up to adversity.

As a Quaker and a psychotherapist, I have been disturbed by the plight of refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people. The project offers me the chance to help people working with this kind of population have the tools and awareness to help in a caring and compassionate way without the risk of re-traumatising or suffering burn-out.

For more information

www.qcea.org/helpers or helpers@qcea.org

Helping the Helpers would like to thank our generous donors

Irish Quaker Faith in Action
Olympia Monthly meeting
Agate Passage Meeting
North Pacific YM Junior Friends

Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting
Michelle Mildener
Matthias Druba
...as well as our anonymous Friends
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QCEA's important work on peace and human rights depends on your generous support. Over 50% of our income comes from donations, and we receive no money from the European institutions, meaning we can speak truth to power without fear or favour.

Donating is quick, easy and makes a real difference to our work. Here's how to help.

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Friends in the United Kingdom only can also donate by sending a cheque or charity voucher payable to British Friends of Quaker Council for European Affairs to:
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