



Pax Scotia

Issue 43

Contents:

Page 2: Anna Maddrick on ecocide - the 'fifth crime against peace'

Page 3: Sara Gawhary updates us on Afghan women's situation

Page 4: Matthew Brown - creating a safe place to dialogue



Act to bring peace to Gaza, says Fr Jim Lawlor

Fr Jim Lawlor is parish priest at the church of The Immaculate Conception in Maryhill, Glasgow. He made quite a stir on social media when a video of his homily about the conflict in the Holy Land was shared. Here he sums up his thoughts on the tragic situation & asks us to act.

The most recent figures from Gaza as I write this are heading for a shocking 30,000 dead – more than 12,300 of whom are children. That's more than the entire primary and secondary school population of north-west Glasgow. Let that sink in!

Watching the distressing scenes of wee families in Gaza, beleaguered and destroyed in the very place where Jesus was born has led me to speak out against this horror.

Years ago, my first tutor at Oxford was a Jewish woman who fled Vienna after the Nazi invasion and escape the Holocaust. She knew suffering because many of her family did not make it.

From the time spent with Magda Ungar, I learned such a reverence for the Jewish faith and people, and she also gave me a sense of the horror that her people endured. It's so important to keep that memory alive so that it never, ever happens again.

Learning from Magda about the Shoah, I took the chance to visit Auschwitz and Majdanek, the national Polish memorial. Carved on the monument above the crematoria there are chilling Polish words: 'Our fate is a warning to you'. I fear we've not heeded that warning. Nor have we learned from the past as we seem not just condemned but almost determined to repeat it.

Magda's experience often left me wondering, had I lived during that Nazi regime would I have had the courage to stand up and be counted? Would I have had the moral strength of Dietrich Bonhoeffer or the

Jesuit Alfred Delp, to say 'Not in my name'? When I look at what's happening in the world today, I feel the urgency of that same dilemma. Will I speak up now?

Martin Niemöller survived the war and wrote...

First they came for the Communists, and I did not speak out because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out, because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me. And there was no one left to speak out for me.

Niemöller reminds us it's not enough to be upset by the images coming from Gaza. We need to speak up and decry what's happening. It's a moral imperative. It's even a legal imperative, because in law the person who keeps silent is giving assent. Speaking up means, at the very least, that I will not be complicit in the indiscriminate killing of innocent Palestinians. Not in my name!

Historical and cultural intricacies and difficulties make the tension in the Holy Land incredibly complicated. We know that Hamas must be brought to justice for their terrible atrocities but so too must Netanyahu and the Israeli government.

In Gaza there is now famine and disease, people maimed and wounded and 1.9 million displaced and pushed south. Jesus was born in that land, a tiny homeless baby. Pushed aside, he too became a refugee. I'd say Jesus is closer to the people of Gaza than to our leaders, decision-makers or the self-righteous ideologues.

Can we stand up? Speak out? Please support SCIAF's campaign to end the killing. Sign the petition. Sign it now. Ask your family - ask everybody you know who worries about our human family, our sisters and brothers in Gaza. Let's use SCIAF to make our voices heard. That Gaza will know peace and know it swiftly. *Jim Lawlor*

<https://www.sciaf.org.uk/get-involved/campaign/590-cry-for-peace-in-the-holy-land>



Anna Maddrick who explains:

*Stop Ecocide International is the global advocacy campaign driving the international movement to see ecocide implemented as the **fifth crime against peace** of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Co-founded by Scottish barrister, the late Polly Higgins (1968-2019), who campaigned rigorously for ecocide law, Scotland is particularly well-suited to lead global efforts towards effective implementation of the crime.'*

The Fifth Crime Against Peace

Anna Maddrick is Legal Analyst at Stop Ecocide International, currently on secondment as a Climate Advisor to the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Vanuatu to the United Nations, and a PhD Candidate at the University of Bologna on ecocide law and judicial enforcement.

The first country to officially declare a climate emergency, Scotland rightfully prides itself on its world-leading emphasis on sustainability and environmental issues. Scotland's environment is world renowned, and therefore the proposal by Monica Lennon MSP for a Scottish crime of "ecocide" is a timely commitment to comprehensive and enforceable environmental protection.

According to the most authoritative definition of the crime, and the one put forward in the proposed Scottish bill, ecocide refers to "unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts".

The crime is therefore constituted by any act or omission that is unlawful (under existing law) or wanton (clearly excessive to the social and / or economic benefits anticipated by the action) and is committed with reasonable knowledge of the prescribed level of damage (i.e. the person knew, or reasonably should have known, that their actions would amount to ecocide). The crime can therefore account for the reality of environmental damage while operating proportionately enough to ensure we do not criminalise actions that sustain the wellbeing of society.

Ecocide is not a crime to punish the ordinary actions of people trying to make a living. The crime is reserved to the most serious actions threatening the environment, with obvious examples such as large oil spills, discharge of sewage into watercourses or mass deforestation that threatens vital habitats and species. While Scotland maintains one of the world's strongest commitments to environmental protection, the current Scottish legal framework is inadequate to prevent mass environmental harm, where, for example, large companies can calculate fines for environmental damage into their yearly budget. Lack of enforceable legal tools against polluters disrupts the playing field for the vast majority of Scottish businesses that do abide by environmental obligations. An enforceable legal tool of ecocide law can deter these actions: freeing time, money, and resources for other environmental restoration efforts, as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation.

As Monica Lennon highlights, halting the continued decline of Scottish landscapes and wildlife is vital, where iconic species such as the red squirrel face extinction. Scotland is facing high levels of destruction of nature, creating implications for, amongst other things, farming practices, climate change, fishing capacity and species survival. There is a growing recognition that governments need to do more to deter actions committed by those at the top that threaten the ecosystems upon which all our human rights depend.

Scotland's leading example with the Proposed Bill can set a powerful precedent and example for other countries to follow.

Protection of Scottish nature is not only important in itself, but also to safeguard the human rights of all of Scotland's population. Climate change and severe environmental destruction threaten to change everything about our world. Ecocide law can serve as an enforceable measure of justice to prevent those whose actions threaten Scotland's precious natural heritage.

Anna Maddrick

Important links:

Proposed Ecocide Prevention (Scotland) Bill, available here: [https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/proposed-members-bills/consultation-document-final-version--\(1\).pdf](https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/proposed-members-bills/consultation-document-final-version--(1).pdf)

<https://www.stopecocide.earth/legal-definition>

<https://news.stv.tv/highlands-islands/braer-disaster-thirty-years-on-from-scotlands-worst-oil-spill-after-tanker-grounded-in-shetland>

<https://inews.co.uk/news/scotland/water-pollution-rivers-scotland-sewage-discharge-2182796>

<https://theferret.scot/scotlands-forests-estates-investors-absentee-owners/>

www.stopecocide.earth

[https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/on-land/red-squirrels#:~:text=Evidence%20shows%20that%20without%20conservation,England%20and%20Scotland%20\(1\)](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/on-land/red-squirrels#:~:text=Evidence%20shows%20that%20without%20conservation,England%20and%20Scotland%20(1))

State of Nature Report, Scotland (2023): <https://stateofnature.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/TP26056-SoN-Scotland-summary-report-v5-1.pdf.pagespeed.ce.ElP-TYaoGQ.pdf>



Making a Meaningful Difference in Afghan Women's Lives

*It is too easy to forget the plight of those affected by conflicts that so recently made headlines. **Sara Gawhary** reflects on the need to support Afghanistan's women since the Taliban banned their education...*

After the collapse of Afghanistan, I left Afghanistan in October 2021 because of the insecure environment and I have been living as a refugee in Germany. When I was accepted there, I thought about how to support Afghan ladies. As a researcher and women's rights activist, in 2021 I conducted research on "women's education rights under the Taliban de facto regime" and then I applied one of my research recommendations and founded WERA, the Women's Empowerment Research Association.

During these years I have finished German language classes and joined different national and international organisations as a researcher to support women's education rights. And as a women's rights activist, I have advocated for women's rights and raised Afghan women's voices on different international platforms, and at high level international conferences.

We started our activities after the collapse of Afghanistan to support Afghan women's education rights under WERA. We aim to promote volunteer activities, to carry out global practical advocacy and support women's rights.

Under this Association, all our teammates do volunteer activities. Happily, we can provide free online education for more than 3,000 Afghan ladies. We call for practical advocacy, and fortuitously, Afghan ladies, the Afghan Diaspora, international individuals, academia, and international organisations have all joined us as volunteer supporters. In addition, in 2023, I did another research project on "the impact of the current de facto regime on the level of women's employment and income.

To explain more about WERA - it is an independent non-profit organisation that commenced operations in March 2022. Our core mission is to foster voluntary activities and scientific research within Afghan society. WERA strives to create a platform empowering women to lead families, institutions, and society.

Recognising cultural and logistical barriers hindering women's participation in traditional academic programmes, we enable online classes to reach a broader audience. Collaborating with national and international organisations, we believe collective efforts yield greater impact.

Sara Gawhary, founder of WERA, the Women's Empowerment Research Association & Pax Christi Scotland supporter



WERA extends its influence globally by advocating for women's leadership and empowerment. Acknowledging the pivotal role women play in sustaining peace, particularly in conflict zones like Afghanistan, we emphasise that women's empowerment is integral to achieving sustainable peace.

In our recent achievements, WERA conducted impactful research, an online session on January 24th, International Education Day. Additionally, we organised two on-campus events in Ankara, Turkey. One, held at Fig Tree, addressed the significance of education for Afghan women. The other occurred during the International Education Day celebration, collaborating with the YTB (a Turkish scholarship scheme) in Ankara, featuring a debate and group discussion.

In addition to our accomplishments, WERA has garnered support from academic communities and various international entities in Turkey. The success of our events in Ankara is a testament to the backing we've received locally. Furthermore, we've actively participated in numerous international conferences and programmes, advocating for women's rights. Notably, we were prominent at the "UN Summit of the Future" and engaged in several youth conferences. These platforms allow us to amplify our voices and contribute to the global dialogue on empowering women. WERA remains committed to building local and international bridges to further our mission of creating a more inclusive and representative society in Afghanistan.

These accomplishments garnered significant media attention, with numerous news outlets covering our organisation's efforts. WERA remains dedicated to making a meaningful difference in the lives of women in Afghanistan by offering leadership programmes, workshops, mentorship opportunities, and evidence-based advocacy activities. *Sara Gawhary*

Our website

Blogs, podcasts, past and future events – these are all on our Pax Christi Scotland website. All newsletters are archived there. You can pay your annual membership fee on the Membership page and make donations. Please explore and share:

<https://www.paxchristiscotland.org>

Continued thanks to webmaster Chris Boles of Caledonian Websites:

<https://www.caledonianwebsites.com/>

Membership Reminder

Please pay by the invoice sent out (see below) - OR

Pay on the membership page of our website.

If you pay by online banking, please give your name to identify your payment.

If you wish to pay by cheque, send to the address below, cheques payable to Pax Christi Scotland.

You can also make regular donations on our 'donate' page or by standing order - thank you.

Membership fees are £10 for waged, £5 for unwaged.

Explore the website for all our activities:

<https://www.paxchristiscotland.org>

Where to find Pax Christi Scotland:

<http://www.paxchristiscotland.org>

[https://www.facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/PaxChristiScotland)

[PaxChristiScotland](#)

[@PaxScotland](#)

Snail mail:

Pax Christi Scotland

c/o Xaverian Missionaries

Calder Avenue

Coatbridge ML5 4JS

YouTube Channel

You can find recordings of all our events at:

<https://www.youtube.com/>

[@paxchristiscotland](#)

[land](#)

Click on the word 'Subscribed' and you will be informed whenever a new recording is posted.

Pax Scotia February-March 2024 Issue 23



A safe space to dialogue

by Matthew Brown,

4th Year Philosophy Student at the University of Edinburgh, and host of

The Critical Sceptic Podcast.

The tensions and conflicts in the Middle East between Israel and Palestine have once again culminated in more violence, bloodshed, loss of life, cries of victimhood and oppression, and the utter dismay of most people who try to gain a foothold on the discussion. There have been many large protests and gatherings on our and many other campuses across the UK, Europe, and America. This is no longer a conversation that be brushed under the rug.

This is why a friend and classmate, Athan Yanos, and I have decided to put on an event to discuss this issue, as difficult and contentious as it may be. The first of these events will be held on the 4th March 2024, 6-9pm at 50 George Square, Lecture hall 3.

We hope to show that it is necessary and possible to come together when we have disagreements, however severe, and bring our arguments to the table outside of the political influence and interests of state actors and mainstream narratives. We want to create a space that is safe for courageous disagreement so that we can try to build a consensus on this conversation – both on what is agreed and disagreed.

Hate and vitriol will not be tolerated. However, we understand and respect that anger is something that many people feel in relation to this topic. Anger is an energy that can lead to understanding, mutual respect, and progress if it is appropriately channelled. We want to facilitate dialogue and criticism that seeks to uplift, heal, and create, not to tear down and destroy.

The format of these events will consist of a 90-minute moderated discussion between speakers followed by a Q&A segment. This will be recorded and published online so that people can watch and join in at home if they are unable to attend. The first event will focus on the ethical, legal, and political justifications for the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. The second event's subject will be the events / interactions between Israel and Palestine after 1948 and into the early 21st century. The final event will focus on the build-up to October 7th, its aftermath, and the future of Israel and Palestinian relations/states.

We want this difficult issue to be made accessible to as many people as possible and for people to hear the arguments from various viewpoints so that they are in the best possible position to make up their own minds. We also want to show that it is possible to come together in times such as these in pursuit of truth, justice, and wisdom. It is crucial that we take real steps as a society to lower the temperature and seek an end to unnecessary suffering, which we believe starts and finishes with dialogue.

Matthew Brown

