



# Pax Scotia

## Issue 63

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## Seeking peace for my children, for Palestine



*Ahmed Miqdad is a teacher, a poet, a father, a man whose home has been in Gaza City, in refugee tents, in displacement camps. He has written for us before. We are grateful that as this fragile process begins which we pray will carry the Holy Land towards peace and justice, Ahmed has given permission to share another poem and he offers a short reflection on the emerging situation. Below he shares a photograph from the family tent.*

After hundreds of days of the genocide, the aggression has ended, but a new phase of suffering and pain has just started because most Palestinians either lost at least one of their beloved or got their home destroyed. In spite all this horrible situation, we are so glad that we have a ceasefire which we hope will be permanent.

Personally, I hope this ceasefire leads to eternal peace in Palestine to make my children and the next Palestinian generations live peacefully like all children around the world.



### No Dinner Tonight

Sleep my son,  
No dinner tonight.  
You can deceive yourself  
And dream of some bread.  
You can devour your hunger  
And drink your salty tears.  
I wish I could help you, my son  
But I'm a helpless father.

The night is dark enough  
To conceal your pain.  
The world is dead enough  
To hear your cry.  
Sleep my son,

I wish I could bring you the crescent  
As a delicious fresh banana  
And the shiny stars as sweet candy.  
I wish I could gift you the world  
As a ball under your feet,  
But I'm the helpless father.

Sleep my son  
To wake up as a martyr tomorrow  
As a number added to the thousands.  
As usual, Humanity will condemn  
And they will show the sympathy  
To a lost donkey rather than a deadly starving child

*Ahmed Miqdad*



*Jan Benvie is a retired primary school teacher who spent 4 years in the Middle East with Christian Peacemaker Teams (now Community Peacemaker Teams) in both Iraq and Palestine. She volunteers as Lead Campaigns Associate with Peace & Justice (Scotland); is a member of the Anglican Third Order of Society St Francis and convener of their Creation, Justice, Peace Network; is Secretary of the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship; a member of Edinburgh Women in Black; and is Secretary of both Edinburgh Action for Palestine and the Scottish Palestinian Forum.*

## The Devastated Landscape: Gaza's 'Ecocide'

At the time of writing, a ceasefire is in place in Gaza. The living Israeli captives have been released and the bodies of some of the deceased, others to follow. Israel has released 1,700 of the several thousand Palestinians they have seized from Gaza and held without charge, along with around 250 convicted Palestinian prisoners – most of them forcibly exiled abroad, in contravention of international law. Israel has also released some of the bodies of Palestinians they have been holding, unnamed, and Gaza's devastated health system has no way of identifying these bodies.

As Palestinians in Gaza return to areas from which they were expelled, the scale of the destruction is becoming increasingly apparent, but for me, watching drone footage of before and after images, what struck me most was the almost total absence of green in the current landscape.

Perhaps it's because I, like many others, have simply got used to seeing the horrific scenes of buildings, streets, whole areas reduced to rubble. The UN estimates that over 80% of all buildings have been destroyed. Or perhaps it's because I was recently reading George Monbiot's article from the Guardian in which he termed the damage to agricultural land

'ecocide'.

Or perhaps it's because if I had previously been taking part in a word association game and someone had said 'Gaza', I would have responded 'strawberries', which may seem strange to many people, but Gaza was a fertile land.

Certainly before October 2023, around 500 aid trucks entered Gaza daily. The need for food and other aid was partly due to the Israeli siege making trade difficult - the unemployment rate in Gaza was around 45%. Gaza also has one of the highest population densities in the world, with around 70% of the population refugees from the Nakba (when the state of Israel was established and Palestinians were expelled or fled).

But around 40% of the land was farmed, and this provided fresh vegetables, fruit (including strawberries), olives, milk and poultry for the population, as well as vital employment and income for many families.

***Even with a ceasefire, the devastation of farmland will take decades to restore.***

In October, a report in Yale Environment 360, published by Yale University in the USA, found that *"an analysis of satellite imagery reveals 95 percent of*

*of cropland has been damaged"*.

On 17 October, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) posted that *"Almost all of #Gaza's farmland is destroyed or inaccessible. A kilo of tomatoes that once cost 60¢, now costs \$15 - if found at all. Families who once lived from their land now have no income. People cannot afford the food reappearing in the markets. Until Gaza's agricultural sector can be rebuilt, there must be an unrestricted flow of aid."*

There is a long road of recovery for the Palestinians of Gaza, and it must be part of the road that leads to an end of Israel's occupation – declared illegal in an International Court of Justice ruling last year.

As I look at the images of the destroyed farmland in Gaza, and as I pray for justice and peace in the Holy Land, I am reminded of the words of the Hebrew prophet Isaiah (chapter 55, v 12):

***You shall go out in joy and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.***

*Jan Benvie*

Additional information:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/sep/27/israel-ecocide-gaza-bombs-agricultural-land-genocide>

<https://e360.yale.edu/digest/gaza-october-2025-damage-assessment#:~:text=Some%2084%20percent%20of%20buildings,Yin%20et%20al.>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1GmLKoFwsP/?mibextid=wwXlfr>



**Carolyn Merry** is Leader of The Ammerdown Centre for Peace, Reconciliation and Nonviolence. She has been fascinated by the concept of peace since childhood and before joining The Ammerdown Centre,, spent over 25 years working in the humanitarian, international development and peacebuilding sectors around the world, often in places of war, extreme poverty, repressive discrimination and exclusion of those most vulnerable. Her passion for nonviolence and peacemaking in its most holistic sense, is deeply rooted in her Christian faith and experiences around the world living and working beside people with different faiths, cultures, beliefs, worldviews and life experiences. She was director of Place for Hope and CEO of The Feast. Her new role aims to establish a hub for the study and practice of spiritual and strategic nonviolence.



## Peace Through Strength?

On the 13th October, when the remaining 20 living Israeli hostages and over 1700 Palestinian prisoners and detainees were freed, I listened to the whole BBC broadcast of the Knesset session that included speeches by Prime Minister Netanyahu, Opposition Leader Lapid and US President Trump. It felt important to hear what narrative was taking shape in that room (and for the world). I had many different thoughts and feelings as I listened to those speeches and the tone of that session – but that will require longer and more words than this piece allows.

However, one small phrase that was repeatedly used by President Trump and affirmed by others, I found completely jarring - “Peace through strength.”

I have lived and worked in enough war zones to understand the pull towards the need for ‘strong men’ and why the current far-right Israeli government needed to look like they had achieved their goals through their ‘tough stance and military might’ – not just in Gaza, but also in the region.

Nevertheless, despite feeling sickened by the multiple references to weapons, the utter lack of recognition of the devastation in Gaza, the backslapping over a job well done and reframing of the genocide of Palestinians as the naïve judgement of the world deceived by Hamas – it is this phrase that has jarred most with me.

I believe the reason it jarred so deeply, was that the idea that peace requires a strength based on weapons, wealth, connections is not just a momentary chest thumping exercise but a model of power that is actually rooted in fear and is leading the world to the rise of authoritarianism and fascism (again), increasing poverty and polarisation and environmental collapse.

As a Christian with a core value of nonviolence, I actually believe that peace does come through strength, but a very different type of strength than that touted in the Knessett. The kind of strength that Jesus modelled throughout his life and death. The kind of strength which requires courage, creativity, compassion and hope. The kind of strength that will be needed for true peace for both Israelis and Palestinians (and indeed all of us). A strength that can:

- \* Self-reflect: Before we attribute the blame anywhere, we need an honest self-examination to understand how our words/actions or silence/inaction could have contributed to the harm of others. As appealing as one person or group being 100% at fault – the reality is rarely that simple.

- \* Take responsibility/Be accountable for what we have done/not done.

- \* Share unarmed truth: share my experiences of the conflict and the impact it has had on me, and also have the strength to genuinely listen to others do the same.

- \* Seeks always to see God in the other and work for their good as

well as mine.

- \* Dare to imagine a different future in which all (not only me and mine) can flourish.

- \* Be present in the world as an unarmed person secure solely in my identity as a beloved child of God (and so is everyone else), even if that makes me vulnerable.

Nonviolence practitioner Kazu Haga may call this ‘fierce vulnerability’. I call it nonviolence. Jesus may simply call it love.

Whatever we call this type of strength, I believe it is the only way to Peace. That is my hope....

***“I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant.”*** Martin Luther King Jr

### A moment to breathe real peace to life...?

Breathe in the joy with news of a peace plan  
Breathe out the worry of, will it hold?

Breathe in the hope of hostages going home and prisoners freed  
Breathe out the knowledge of the post-trauma healing journey ahead.

Breathe in the quiet – the silencing of drones, of explosions and gunfire, of screams  
Breathe out the silence of standing amid the ruins.

Breathe in the miracle of those who have survived  
Breathe out the pain of those who have not.

Breathe in amidst the tears of daring to believe this is the turning point  
Breathe out amidst the tears that cannot fathom all that has been destroyed.

Breathe in this moment of possibility and choice  
Breathe out the fears that what will come may not include truth, accountability, justice, equality, healing, repair, and the establishment of a foundation for a different future.

Breathe in as direct violence pauses  
Breathe out as the long wait for structural and cultural violence to end may also now be over?

Breathe in this moment  
Breathe out....and let's start the real work for genuine peace where all can live free from fear, and with basic needs, dignity, freedom, justice and hope.

God help us – to not waste this moment.

Amen Carolyn Merry



## Our website

Blogs, podcasts, book projects, 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 in November on the membership page of our website, or, 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 per annum 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>

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

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

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

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/](https://www.youtube.com/@paxchristiscotland)

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

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# Pot Banging for Peace



What on Earth could prompt otherwise reserved and genteel elderly ladies and gentlemen to stand on a public street corner, drawing attention to themselves by banging large metal spoons, saucepans and lids together as noisily as possible? Why would such people gather in small groups all over Scotland and further afield regularly at 6 o'clock every Thursday evening, waving at passersby who salute them and holding placards and banners?

The answer lies in the need to act to bring about justice, peace, reconciliation and compassion, an impulse that lies deep within our souls, which urges us to intervene when we see cruelty and hatred rampant, causing misery and devastation to peace-loving people, no matter how far away they are from us. When we see and hear in real time that men, women and little children in Palestine are being deliberately deprived of food, water, energy, education and health care, while being bombed relentlessly by Israeli 'defence forces', many of us otherwise quiet citizens cannot stay silent. We seek ways of peaceful protest, we are consumed by the urge to shout: "NO! Not in my name! I do not condone your conduct!"

If we do SOMETHING, we avoid the pitfall of doing nothing.

Peaceful protest is a way of countering the feelings of hopelessness that so many people experience in the face of overwhelming injustice, poverty, and violence around us. Joining together and making our voices heard is an effective way of

challenging injustice; but it also challenges the sense of futility that paralyses us and leads to us becoming depressed and resentful, feeling that it is pointless to try and make any changes.

The current UK government should realise that people who are able to protest peacefully are mentally healthier than those who are 'cowed into submission' and forced to accept harmful practices and policies. A Labour government should not be the political party that outlaws protest.

People who protest peacefully are the opposite of terrorists. We may make a big noise, or gather in large groups, or wave banners or even dress in fancy dress costumes, but we are acting prophetically, drawing attention to injustice and challenging oppression. And so my fellow protesters and I will continue to gather on the street corner here in New Galloway every Thursday at 6 pm - and in Kirkcudbright and Glasgow and Edinburgh and London and in many, many other places all around the world, as we make an effort to act to remind governments, politicians and military and faith leaders that despite a ceasefire there is still untold suffering and devastation in Palestine.

Maybe you would also like to support this peaceful protest to make sure people keep talking about Gaza? The pot banging website address is listed below and it is really easy to start a protest group.

*Anne Dobbing*

Anne is a Pax Christi Scotland Executive Committee Member and proud peaceful protester.

[potbangingforgaza.com](https://www.potbangingforgaza.com)

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