

# New Hampshire Peace Action News

FALL

VOLUME 28, NO 3

by Will Hopkins

## From the Director: Isis and the Empire

In 94% of Federal elections, whoever spends the most money wins, in the rest, it is generally the nominee of the other Wall Street backed party, the one who spends the second largest sum. The top 50% of campaign funding is provided by .04% of the US population of individuals and corporations, many fund both sides of elections. When the same interests fund both parties, a candidate who stands on the side of the people over moneyed interests can seldom be taken seriously. This .04% of Americans essentially create a system where a small club of moneyed political gatekeepers get to make sure that the only candidates we get to vote for or hear from, are those who will do exactly what those folks want. Just enough variance and debate is allowed on issues not central to those interests, to keep people believing they have a say in the process and their views matter.

This system puts the most powerful, expensive, technologically advanced, and geographically hegemonic military the world has ever seen in the hands of this small group of elites, where they can use it for personal gain at the expense of the American taxpayer.

With the assistance of a complicit corporate media, whose profits depend on the political ads this system generates, and a truly massive intelligence apparatus which has proven itself completely lawless and immune to oversight of any kind (not that we could trust Congress to do it) this small group of oligarchs are able to convince most Americans that our military adventures spread “freedom and democracy”.

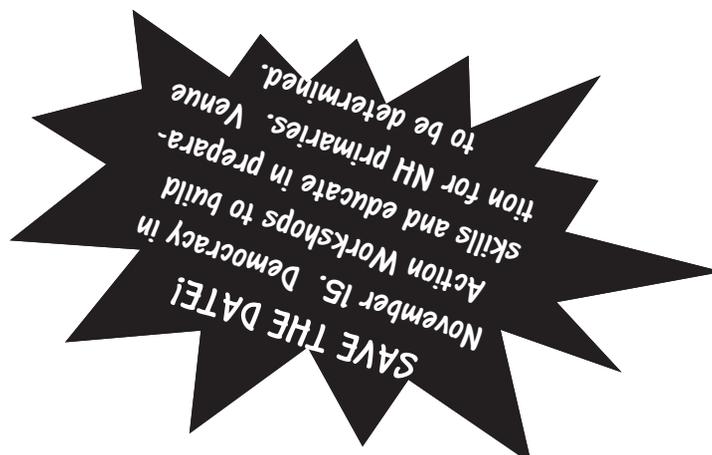
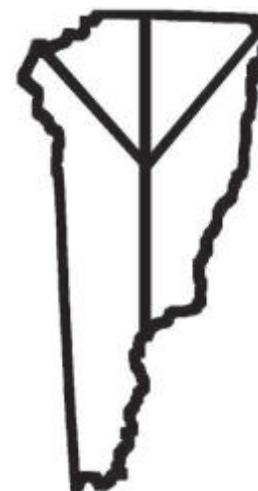
But for every government the empire topples, every despot they support, every house they blow up, and every child they roast alive, there are unintended consequences. The CIA created the mujahedeen, who later became Al Qaeda and the Taliban to fight against the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan and the Soviet Union who supported them, they propped up Saddam Hussein, Muammar Gaddafi, and Bashar Assad so long as they sold oil on our terms. Once they stopped playing by the rules of the oligarchs, they changed from being “our guy” to “brutal dictators”, and the United States started funding and arming opposition groups, or went to war. It should not come as a surprise to anyone, that with Iraq reeling from 23 years of US sanctions, airstrikes, and troops that one of those

(Continued on page 5)

Inside this Issue	
1	From the Director
2	Palestine Education Network News
3	Campaign Nonviolence Report
4	Slavery and Chocolate
6	Peace of Mind
7	An Interview with Ayman Nijim

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## Palestine Education News

PEN continues to meet monthly, as it has done since 2005, to plan for various projects to educate the general public about the severe discrimination Palestinians endure under Israeli domination. Treatment of the indigenous peoples of Palestine has ramifications throughout the entire Middle East and throughout the western world. PEN's purpose is to shed light on this discrimination until all people under Israel's jurisdiction are treated equally.

In the summer and fall of 2013 PEN conducted its biannual fund drive which netted \$1097--a nice boost to its bank account. During the same period a committee of three wrote and designed a completely new trifold which introduces PEN to the public.

On November 16, '13 Pen members joined Veterans for Peace to wave signs to guests at a Democratic Fund raiser in downtown Manchester. The signs called for cutbacks in military appropriations and in military aid to Israel.

Each year Carolyn Cicciu manages the sale of calendars produced by photojournalist Hamde Abu Rahma of Bel'in, Palestine. The proceeds from calendar sales go to the people in Bel'in who, according to their own statement, "follow Gandhi's principles of non-violence to end Israel's occupation." These activists regularly come face to face with rifle-pointing soldiers, dogs, tear gas and unlimited legal power. Calendars for 2015 will be for sale at the PEN table at the annual dinner Oct. 24. Please buy one to help our in spirit brothers and sisters of Bel'in. The calendars also make excellent Christmas presents!

On February 8, PEN had an all-day meeting at Janet Simmon's house to view films for a Palestinian Film festival, which was held Oct. 5 at the Red River Theatre in Concord. The films are "Where Should the Birds



Shuhada Street, Hebron, Palestine. Israel's settlers and their guests get 2/3rds of Hebron's main street. The native population gets 1/3<sup>rd</sup>. - Photo by Carolyn Cicciu

Fly?" at 12:15 p.m., "Voices Across the Divide" at 2:30 p.m., and "Al-Helm: Martin Luther King in Palestine" at 5:00 p.m. Ridgely Fuller and Ayman Nijim facilitated discussion after the first film, Dr. Alice Roth-

child led discussion after the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Abu Jabarah after the last film. (Please see the text of an interview with Ayman Nijim on page 7)

On February 24 PEN held an "Open Shuhada Street" demonstration in Manchester. It visited the offices of Senators Shaheen and Ayotte and Representative Kuster. Members left information and the photo Carolyn Cicciu took of Shuhada Street in 2013. The photo shows how Israelis segregate the main street according to who are Jews and who are native citizens of Hebron. Pen also held a demonstration at Manchester's Ben & Jerry's ice cream shop on April 8 as part of the growing BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) movement. Ben & Jerry's maintains a manufacturing facility in Ma'ale Adumin outside Jerusalem. It is on land illegally taken by Israel.

PEN is also actively engaged with the New England Network for Jus-



PEN tent showing new banner. Visitors in front, Betsy Kelley on far left. Black cloth was hung in sorrow for the high numbers of Palestinians killed, injured and homes destroyed in Israel's "Operation Protective Edge."

tice and Peace in Palestine (NENJP). NENJP is a sharing of information organization. As representatives from New Hampshire we meet with NENJP three times a year. We met in Brattleboro, VT in September, '13, in Bedford MA in January and Dedham MA on May 3, '14.

PEN had a particularly successful tent presentation this year at the annual Concord Market Days affair. Continuing to work with Peace Action we shared rental expenses, new tent costs, and new signage arrangements. Last year's storms ruined both our tents so new ones were bought. PEN had a newly designed sign modelled on its logo. Like PA's banner, this year's PEN banner was mounted on polls above the tent rather than taped to tables under the tent as heretofore.

Shocked by Israel's "Operation Brothers' Keeper" a.k.a. "Operation Protective Edge" in which 71 Israelis were killed but in contrast 2150

## PEN News *continued*

Palestinians were killed (408 were children) and 9,500 injured (2,877 were children) and 110,000 homes destroyed. PEN members participated in demonstrations in Boston July 11 and July 21. Members also joined a five mile march in Boston on August 17 sponsored by the Boston Coalition for Palestinian Rights and by Boston University Students for Peace and Justice in Palestine.

PEN maintained its tent again at the Laconia Multicultural Day September 6 and sponsored a half page ad in the event's brochure as it does with Peace Action's brochures.

Often after our meetings PEN writes letters to people or organizations currently in the news. It has written to NH's Congressional representatives, to universities urging fair treatment of the SJP (Students for Justice in Palestine) movement and the "Open Hillel" movement. It wrote one to Pope Francis in February urging him to visit Palestine—at a time when he seemed to be weighing the decision.

Individual PEN members also write letters in their area newspapers. PEN members often attend events in the Boston/Cambridge environs by which they make good connections and stay informed. Four of its active members have visited Israel and the West Bank on several occasions.

Will Thomas maintains a show every Tuesday 1:00-1:30 p.m. on local access TV entitled "Veterans Speak Out." In addition to militarism with all its ramifications, the unfair treatment of Palestinians is a recurrent topic, and PEN's activities are made known.

PEN joins Peace Action in its vigils and demonstrations. The demonstration in front of the Elbit Corporation was particularly successful in that it drew a front page article in the Nashua Telegraph which included a photo of and an interview with PEN member Janet Simmon.

Following the Palestinian Film Festival PEN sponsored a talk the next day October 6, "Inside Gaza" at the Keene Public Library October 6. The speaker was Ayman Nijim, commentator at the Palestine Film Festival. Nijim, a citizen of Gaza, is now a student at the School for International Training (SIT) in Brattleboro, VT. He was followed by Salaam Odeh of Manchester, NH who will speak on "Inside the West Bank."

Former PEN member Rev. David Van Strien died June 29, 2014. He was a regular and active member from PEN's beginnings until health problems in 2011 prevented his participation. He was also one of the key founders of "Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East" (UUJME).

James G. Smart

*The author is a member of NH Peace Action and the Palestine Education Network. He resides in Keene, NH*

## Campaign Nonviolence Activities

September 21 marked the United Nations International Day of Peace, and kicked off a week of action called "Campaign Nonviolence". The idea of the week of action originated with Pace E Bene, and came to New Hampshire via the New England organizer for Pace E Bene, LR Berger (who was my wife's maid of honor at our wedding and was present for the birth of my daughter Aurora). NH Peace Action put this week of action on our calendar and along with Pace E Bene, 350NH and the United Church of Christ peace with justice advocates got to work organizing. Across the nation Campaign Nonviolence brought over 230 actions, here in New Hampshire, we had at least two every day, for a total of 25 actions. Well over a hundred people participated in walks, vigils, lobby visits, an art expo, and film showings. Our purpose was to take and inspire action to stop war, poverty, and the climate crisis. Here are some of the highlights:

- About a dozen people participated in a walk from violence to peace, we walked 4.6 miles with stops at BAE systems and Elbit corporation eventually reaching resolution at Greeley Park in Nashua.
- A similar walk themed around creating peace through economic justice and ending poverty took place on the seacoast.
- Art for Peace was held on the Statehouse lawn with musicians, painters, knitters, poets, sculptors and more expressing their vision of peace.
- The Economics of Happiness and the Ghosts of Jeju Island were each shown with discussion.
- Vigils took place all over the state.
- All four of New Hampshire's representatives had lobby visits where war, povert, and the climate crisis were discussed, and copies of Phyllis Bennis' "6 Steps Short of War to Beat ISIS" were distributed along with Campaign Nonviolence event listings.
- Members rode buses to the People's Climate March in New York City, and NH Youth for Peace and Justice made it an overnight trip with parents and NH Peace Action Education Fund board members chaperoning.

If you missed the action though, don't fret, these actions were set to inspire a culture of action, this is not the end.



Members vigiling and marching in Rochester during Campaign Nonviolence.



From the Director *continued from Page 1*

groups from Syria got out of hand and crossed the border to take swaths of the unstable fledgling puppet state.

ISIS is this child of American misadventure, Secretary of State John Kerry calls it “ugly, savage, inexplicable, nihilistic, and valueless evil” which indeed it seems they may be. Crucifixion, beheadings, wholesale slaughter, and systematic rape are among the favored tools of ISIS, their targets seem to be anyone who is in their path and does not subscribe to every piece of their dogma, and it is hard to argue that in the short term, bombing and using military force to stop ISIS may save many innocent lives. We are told that ISIS is so unflinchingly psychopathic, that bombings may not be enough to stop this chaotic and merciless band, that ground troops may be the only solution.

And we are again to war, and maybe, at least in the short term, this will save innocent lives. Just because a conflict is being initiated by a force focused on hegemony and corporate control of resources doesn’t mean it can’t occasionally align with a person’s perspective of what is right. I’m not sure I can say in the short term. But I can say this, thanks to our wars of choice, our economy is staggering and unsteady, millions live in poverty, our government is in obscene debt, our soldiers (those who are still alive) are wounded and tired, our populace is war weary and numb to the images of bodies on the nightly news, and now, a new and even more violent group has been born of the chaos we have sown. I hope as the United States marches yet again into a military conflict with no end in sight, that some of us may take the time to wonder between the beats of the media’s war drum, “if bombing, and funding and arming opposing groups, and war made ISIS, how will the same strategies destroy it?”

*Will Hopkins is Director of NH Peace Action and NH Peace Action Education Fund.*



In June, Governor Maggie Hassan signed into law HB 1321, making New Hampshire the second state to legislate student privacy when they take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test in public schools.



Peace Action members walked from the Common Man Restaurant in Merrimack to Elbit Systems Merrimack NH plant (Elbit is an Israeli manufacturer of drones) as part of the weeklong Campaign Nonviolence activities.

### War's Pitfalls

*By Lynn Chong*

“Nobody wants to be dragged into a war,”  
quotes a west African man living  
also with the fright of disease.

Dragged into a war  
means arms, legs, heads, minds, shoulders  
bent to bloody tasks of destruction.

Quotes a west African man living  
in the verdant and shimmering heat  
that nurtured our earliest ancestors....

Also with the fright of disease  
now in 2014 when killer Ebola is raging  
so people doubt, have losses, farewells.

#### **New Hampshire Peace Action Staff**

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## 2014 Peace of Mind Conference

By Abby Colby

ALBANY- New Hampshire Youth for Peace and Justice (NHYPJ) kicked off their annual fall conference (Peace of Mind) at the World Fellowship Center in Albany, New Hampshire on September 6th and 7th. 23 youth attended POM this year from multiple schools across New Hampshire, including student refugees from the Congo who go to Concord High School. There were workshops on Saturday and Sunday facilitated by Will Hopkins, Olivia Zink, Rachel Vogelzang, Alex Freid and Fay Christoforo. Zink ran workshops on organizing campaigns, Vogelzang spoke of her experiences in Ferguson, and Freid and Christoforo carried out a wrap up discussion.

Mattias Lambert, a senior at Concord High School (CHS), went to POM last year and has found both of his experiences at the conference to be extremely positive. "I think POM is the perfect place for people [who] are already established activists, and people who are just dipping their toes in. It's a place for people to learn about organizing as a whole, and a place to learn about individual issues or conflicts that concern us." Delany Collins, a junior at CHS attended POM for the first time, finds that the conference is "[something] all informed, or even just inspired young people should experience." Collins also noted that all the speakers and workshops were extremely relevant to the whole weekend. Lambert attested to this, saying "all of the speakers were amazing. After listening to Olivia Zink, I felt like I had been living under a rock in terms of my knowledge or organizing strategies. It was also great to hear Rachel Vogelzang speak, as she had actually gone to Ferguson and witnessed and took part in the protests." Isabelle Saputo, a junior at Oyster River High School, also really enjoyed Vogelzang's speech. "I really enjoyed Rachel's [speech] who talked about her experience going to Ferguson because it was a perspective that I hadn't heard before. The news can only cover so much but she was actually there and experienced the anger and pain so that was really memorable and influential to me."

This was Lambert and Saputo's second time at POM, and they've both found the group dynamic from last year to this year has been incredibly different, in a good way. "Think this year was in part different due to the crowd that showed up. Last year, nearly all, if not all of the attendees have been living in America their whole lives. This year, however, there was a large group of students who are refugees from the Congo, which completely changed the social dynamic and conversational dynamic, in nothing but good ways. Their presence made all of the workshops seem much more worldly," explained Lambert. Saputo agreed, saying "[they] were some of the funniest and greatest people I've ever met, but that could also be said about all the people who go to POM." Madi Pelletier-Murrill, a junior at ORHS attended POM for the first time this year, but loved the dynamic of the group. "The group was a really neat mixture of people. There were the veteran NHYPJ kids, the newbies like myself, and the refugee students who added a wonderful learning experience to the mix. I think people got along really well, I wouldn't have wanted the group to be any other way."

Pelletier-Murrill, Lambert, Collins, and Saputo all find that the location has everything to do with the POM experience. "There honestly could not be a more perfect place for the conference to be held. The secluded and safe feeling that the World Fellowship Center gives allowed for outdoor immersion as well as a removed area that encouraged everyone to bond and connect," explained Pelletier-Murrill. "[It's] a place where we can all feel safe and free to debate ideas. I think the location is one of the greatest things about POM," said Saputo.

I myself have been involved with NHYPJ for a few years, and this was my second time at POM. For me, POM is one of the highlights of my year. The two years that I've participated, I've left with a stronger sense of the issues that we face as a society, but also where I, and millions of other youth, fit into movements of social change. We leave with the skill to organize campaigns and the knowledge of what to organize our campaigns around, but most importantly we leave with each other, and a solidarity of youth who will work together to affect change.

*Abby Colby is Junior at Oyster-River High School in Durham and a member of the NH Youth for Peace and Justice group of NH Peace Action.*



Some of the attendees of Peace of Mind got up at dawn to climb Boulder Loop

*The Board and Staff of NH Peace Action Education Fund would like to thank the*  
**Anne Slade Frey**  
**Charitable Trust**  
*for ongoing support of this newsletter and our other educational programs*

The following is an interview with Ayman Nijim, one of the discussion facilitators for the Palestine Film Festival. Nijim is a child trauma specialist and human rights activist from Gaza.

Life in Gaza: an Interview with Ayman Nijim  
by Sojun Godfrey

### **How does the siege affect children in Gaza?**

The population of the Gaza strip is 1.8 million people living on a small enclave of land and 52% of the population is children. They call us the nation of kids. 92% of children in Gaza suffer from traumatic stress. Every child in Palestine has experienced 3 traumatic experiences in his life, if not more. They manifest symptoms like involuntary urination, nightmares, jealousy, they can get aggressive with their peers in the schools. And after each war it gets worse.

In terms of psychology we call this Chronic Traumatic Stress Disorder, which means that it is ongoing stress. It is not Post Traumatic Stress Disorder because the traumatic stress does not stop. It is ongoing killing of Palestinians, so kids are experiencing ongoing trauma. It is very difficult to treat this.

When we talk about the casualties of war we usually only talk about the numbers of people who are killed. The number of people made homeless. We don't see the psychological aftermath of genocide. For every person killed there were five children who saw it happen. There are children who are losing parents and brothers and sisters and friends.

I saw a report last week that stated that the mental health situation in Gaza is very dire and it is only getting worse. All the aggressions happened in residential areas. At this point, 70% of the people killed in Gaza during this crisis are civilians. They say that Hamas is hiding behind residential areas. But Israel knows that Gaza is small and densely populated, 6000 people per sq. kilometer. There are people everywhere. They say we are being used as human shields, but that just gives Israel an excuse to kill civilians with impunity.

### **Tell me about your experience with children in Gaza.**

I have two kids in Gaza. It is difficult to talk about. I called my daughter who is 4 years old. My daughter told me they killed six people from my neighborhood. One I used to give coins to to buy chocolate or sweets. My daughter is smarter than her age. She said to me "Mama told me you'd be sad if I told you, so don't tell her I told you." She will grow up with it ingrained in her mind that she has a spiteful enemy. She's just a little girl. She doesn't know about religion, she just knows that someone killed our neighbors. Can I lie to her and tell her that didn't happen? She can go outside and see for herself. She will hear the screams of their mothers. The wails of the women. I cannot protect her. It is very hard.

When I called my son he asks if I am okay and I felt like he was trying to comfort me. The kids are seeing demolitions everyday. They see an enemy, a real one, that kills them indiscriminately. It is hard for them to accept.

### **What is it like for you to live in Gaza?**

They are ghettoizing Gaza. You can't live in it. It starts with discrimination. You can see it everywhere with the apartheid wall. Gaza cannot have an airport. We cannot go fishing, the drones are always over our heads. We can't go to the West Bank which is just 20 min. by car. I've lived in Palestine for my whole life and I have never been to the West Bank.

Jews have a right to exist wherever they like. We don't care about religion.

We only care about Palestinians right to exist peacefully. They want to project their fears on the Palestinians by saying that we are subhuman. Like the member of the Knesset the other day who said we are little snakes. It was the same with Hitler. He called Jews liars and cheaters. He called them subhuman. It is the same with apartheid South Africa.

### **What do you want Americans to know about what is happening in Gaza?**

This is not a war between two equal parties. We have rocks, they have nuclear bombs. I want Americans to know that funding Israel will not bring peace to the world. After being here I can tell you that many people here support Palestine, but the US government still funds Israel. If the US government wants to abide by democracy they must listen to their people.

And I ask that Americans support Palestinians wherever they can by Boycotting, by Divesting, by Sanctions.

People have a right to fight for their self-determination. For their human rights and against the massacre of their people. People under war, under attacks, under genocide, they need to fight back. If someone smacks you every day, what can you do? You can stay non-violent, but if they start to kill you, you have to fight back. We have a right to defend ourselves. We are on the side of all oppressed people and we are fighting for the basic principles of Human Rights.

We have to fight for everyone's human rights, because being silent will not bring peace to the world. Being silent means you are a passive onlooker to other people's suffering. I ask people to listen to their hearts, look to the Civil Rights movement. Martin Luther King said "Injustice anywhere is a threat to Justice everywhere." Work hard for the human rights of all people, because life is precious when we are all connected, when we can see each other as brothers and sisters. It doesn't matter if you are Muslim or Christian or Jewish to fight against Zionism. You just need to be human.

--Sojun Godfrey is an elementary school teacher and activist in Burlington, Vt.



Peace Action member Krystin Watts created this beautiful drawing of the Art for Peace event held on September 28 in Concord.

Christmas is coming and we have LOTS of great gift ideas and stocking stuffers in the office! There are books and CD's, T-shirts and coffee mugs, tons of bumper stickers and peace-themed jewelry. Stop by when you're in Concord!

Please check our website [nhpeaceaction.org](http://nhpeaceaction.org) or our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/NhPeaceAction](http://www.facebook.com/NhPeaceAction) for updates and information.

The newsletter is now printed on recycled paper with 100% no no-rub water based inks. There are no hazardous chemicals and it is compost friendly!

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*This beautiful quilt, made from Irene Irving's t-shirts by her daughters and donated to NHPA, will be raffled at the October 24 Annual Event. Tickets are \$20 each or 10 for \$100, and you may purchase them prior to the event by calling the office (228-0559) or stopping by 4 Park Street.*

*If you haven't already registered for the event, do it today!*



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