

[View this email in your browser](#)



2024 April Issue No. 4

Table of Contents

From Our Chair

LASER Dates

Campaigning

- Palestine
- Women, Peace and Security
- Global Plastics Treaty

Groups' Support

- Inspirational Projects
- Annual Carbon Footprint Survey
- Working Group on UN Security Council
- Workshop to empower Women's Grassroots Organisations
- Great Big Green Week
- Financial Support Available for Groups
- Chair for UNA Blackheath and Greenwich

Events

- UNA Eastbourne
- UNA Warwick
- UNA Twickenham and Richmond
- UNA London Trust
- UNA Harpenden
- UNA Westminster
- UNA Luton
- UNA Cardiff and District

The Next Edition of Pulse

From Our Chair



Trisha Rogers

On 1st April it seems that Israel attacked the Iranian consulate in Damascus, breaking Article 22 of the 1961 [Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations](#). This attack was a step change in the pattern of escalating Israeli attacks in Syria since the Hamas massacre of more than 1,000 Israelis on 7th October. Iran then made it clear that it would retaliate but waited nearly 2 weeks before launching its first-ever direct attack on Israel. This gave time to Israel and its allies (mainly the US, but also including the UK and France) to strengthen Israel's defences. They managed to destroy more than 90% of the 300+ missiles and drones that Iran fired on Israel, resulting in only a few civilian injuries (no fatalities) and some damage to a military facility. This attack demonstrated both that Iran would respond to direct attacks (such as on the consulate in Damascus), and the strength of Israel's defences. Surely honour can be satisfied on both sides. However, the welcome distraction for Israel of media attention away from the 33,000 deaths and continuing terrible suffering in Gaza – as well as Israel's angry statements in response to Iran's attacks – suggest they are planning further to escalate the hostilities with Iran. We hope the urging of their allies – including [the UK](#) – as well as the [demands of the UN Secretary-General](#) – will convince them that "it is time to step back from the brink". As the Secretary-General stated, all should focus on our "shared responsibility to secure an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, and the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid."

LASER Dates

CORRECTION: Many apologies for a mistake in the last *Pulse*. **Our 2024 AGM will be at Bermondsey Village Hall on 2nd November (not 2nd December)**. It will include a Presidential Address from HE Dr Fatou Bensouda, former Chief Prosecutor at the International Criminal Court. Please correct your calendars!



On 22nd June, 11:00 (for 11:30) – 16:45, at **St. Peter's Community Centre, Church Street, Bexhill-on-Sea, TN40 2HE**, UNA Bexhill and Hastings are hosting the **LASER Summer Council on *Ploughshares into Swords***, considering ways to replace wars by sustainable peace as envisaged in the UN Charter. There will be outstanding speakers – **Lord David Hannay** (former UK Permanent Representative at the UN, former Chair of UNA-UK, and Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on the UN) and **Professor Richard Sakwa** (author and academic from the University of Kent) – as well as workshops building on UNA Bexhill and Hastings' *Peace Policy Statement*, which will be shared before the event.

For further information, including on travel suggestions, please see [this handbill](#). Please register [here](#). Although the event will be available online (with [registration here](#)), discussion will be an important component, so we encourage you to attend in-person. If you need help with travel, please [contact me](#). For further information about the event, please contact [Sheila Kesby](#).

Campaigning

Palestine

The deaths and devastation in Gaza continue unabated. What can we do to try to help?

- We can co-sign [this letter](#) UNA-UK has signed to the UK Foreign Secretary and Trade Secretary, urging the cessation of UK arms sales to Israel.
- We can [write to our MPs](#) to resist the *Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters)* Bill – which resumes its Committee Stage in the House of Lords on 17th April, and will then return to the House of Commons – if you think bodies that receive public funding should be able to boycott a country or company of whose behaviour they disapprove (as they did, to great effect, in the campaign to end apartheid in South Africa and as many do now, for example, over goods made in illegal Jewish settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories).
- We can [crowdfund LAWnotWAR](#), promoting the use of legal means – such as the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court– to resolve conflicts.

Women, Peace and Security

Women and girls constitute more than 70% of the more than 33,000 war deaths in Gaza since October 7th and they are also suffering disproportionately (such as by women having caesarean births with no anaesthetic). As we approach, in 2025, the 25th anniversary of the ground-breaking [UN Security Council Resolution 1325](#), and following the publication of the UK's fifth [National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2023-2027](#), our Campaigns Officer, Valeria Minisini, explains the key issues [here](#) and suggests we all [write to our MPs](#) and to the [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office](#) to urge the UK government to:

- promote more actively the participation and leadership of women in conflict-affected settings;
- encourage the consultation of women's and girls' organisations in conflict-affected regions;
- ensure the Ministry of Defence consults and integrates women and girls into peacekeeping processes;
- give more core, flexible and multi-year funding to feminist organisations;
- prioritise the ending of all conflicts, including by observing the [International Arms Trade Treaty](#) of which the UK is a signatory, and having an arms embargo on parties to conflict suspected of breaking international humanitarian law.

Global Plastics Treaty

Congratulations to UNA Climate and Oceans with helping to draft and then co-signing [this letter to the negotiators of the UN Global Plastics Treaty](#) Your group can sign the letter [here](#).

Groups' Support

Inspirational Projects

We continue to share our recent AGM presentations of inspiring activities from LASER groups (aka branches). Blackheath and Greenwich UNA described 2 multi-year successful projects: [fundraising for UNHCR and supporting local asylum seekers](#). This and much other support is on [the Groups' page of our website](#).

Annual Carbon Footprint Survey

To comply with the resolution passed by our Policy Conference in 2019, we urge you to respond to the annual survey recently sent out to individual groups by our Environment Officer, Annesha Kar Gupta.

Working Group on UN Security Council

At the recent UNA Groups' meeting, following presentations from UNA Luton and UNA Bexhill & Hastings on projects they had each

been doing on how to enable the UN to be more effective in building peace, despite a divided Security Council, it was agreed to establish a **Working Group on UN Reform**. If you would like to join this Working Group, please email our [elected trustees](#).

Workshop to Empower Women's Grassroots Organisations

The groups of **South London UNA (SLUNA)** are planning a workshop to empower grassroots women's organisations. If you would like to help, please [contact them](#).

Great Big Green Week

Climate change and protection of the environment continue to be major concerns. The [Great Big Green Week](#), promoted by the Climate Coalition of which LASER is a member, is on 8th-16th June and provides an excellent opportunity to join with others in local action. Do, too, encourage your local teachers to [sign up](#) to receive Climate Coalition resources straight to their inboxes.

Financial Support Available for Groups

[The London UNA Trust](#) has funds to support groups. To find out more, join the 8th May online event described below.

Chair for UNA Blackheath and Greenwich

The committee for UNA Blackheath and Greenwich had lapsed. We are building up an excellent new committee and are now looking for a new Chair. Please [send](#) suggestions.

Events

UNA Eastbourne

Andrew Feinstein is a former African National Congress (ANC) MP who served under Nelson Mandela.
Andrew is the author of *Shadow World: Inside the Global Arms Trade*. He is currently writing a book on the conflicts in Gaza and Yemen and who is profiting from them.



Dr Yara Hawari will join us via a video link from Palestine. She is co-director of Al Shabaka - the Palestine Policy Network. She is also a writer, host of the podcast series 'Rethinking Palestine' and a political commentator for mainstream media outlets.

On 19th April, 18:30, UNA Eastbourne invites you to a free speaker event being held by Eastbourne Palestine Solidarity Campaign on **Apartheid, Arms, Activism** at **Emmanuel Church**, Eastbourne BN21 1LQ. Speakers will be **Andrew Feinstein** and **Dr Yara Hawari**. Palestinian snacks will be served. For further information, please email [here](#).

UNA Warwick

On 27th April, 12:30-13:45, UNA Warwick is holding a hybrid meeting at the **Leamington Spa Baptist Church**, CV32 4RN on **Our Travel Guardians: How a UN Technical Agency Shapes Travel Security**, looking at the work of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). The speaker will be **Alejandra Gentil**, St Andrew's University. To join online, go [here](#).

UNA Twickenham and Richmond

On 4th May, 10:30, UNA Twickenham and Richmond invites you to join a breakfast talk at **St Margaret's Church**, Twickenham TW1 1RL, organised by the Twickenham Repair Centre on **The Dwindling Christian Palestinian Presence in the Holy Land**, by **Sir Vincent Fean**, former British Consul-General in Jerusalem. **Suggested donation £10**. Please book [here](#).

UNA London Trust

The UNA London Trust has funds to support groups. They are holding an online meeting on 8th May, 19:30-21:00 to discuss: how they

work; what types of project you think it's important for them to fund; their application process. Please register [here](#).

UNA Harpenden



On 11th May, 10:30-13:00, UNA Harpenden is hosting a free talk on *Preventing Child Deaths in Africa* by Hefin Rees, Harpenden Spotlight on Africa, at the **Salvation Army Hall**, Harpenden AL5 2TG. The talk will be followed by the AGM. If you are interested in standing for a place on the committee, please contact [the Chair](#). To attend the event, please register [here](#).

Note: In the above image, Africa is shaded according to the geometric mean rank of the composite child-health index (blue = healthiest, green = unhealthiest), from data taken from [maplibrary.org](#).

UNA Westminster

On 23rd May, 10:00-16:00, UNA Westminster is holding its *International Day of UN Peacekeepers 20th Annual Conference and Wreath-Laying Ceremony*. The conference, addressing *New Challenges in Strategic Communications and Security, Women's Leadership in Deployment, Initiatives to Handle Mental Health Issues, and Developments in the DRC*, will be at the **Royal United Services Institute, Whitehall**, SW1A 2ET. The full programme and registration guidance will soon be available [here](#).

On 16th-20th September UNA Westminster is organising a 5-day, 6-night **Study Tour to the UN in Vienna**. It will include presentations by several UN agencies and by leading diplomatic institutes, as well as opportunities to visit the Sigmund Freud and Peace museums and fully to enjoy this delightful city. Without any commitment, please register your interest [here](#).

UNA Luton

On 27th May, 13:00-16:00, starting at **St George's Square, Luton**, next to Luton Town Hall, UNA Luton would welcome participation in their **Annual Women's Carnival Peace Parade**, a well-established part of the Luton International Carnival, to give a message of peace to the multi-cultural audience at Europe's largest one-day street festival. For further information, please contact [UNA Luton Chair](#).

UNA Cardiff and District

On 5th June, 19:00, UNA Cardiff and District is hosting a free webinar on *How to Foster Resilience to Environmental Change*, with speaker **Abid Mehmood**, researcher and teacher in climate change. [Here](#) is the link.

The Next Edition of Laser Pulse

Please [send us](#) any materials or suggestions for the next edition of *Pulse* by 16th May 2024. For announcement of events, it is helpful if you can download and use [this template](#).
