



Network of Christian Peace Organisations

UK General Election 2024

Introduction

The Network of Christian Peace Organisations has produced this briefing to help Christian communities to prepare for the **2024 General Election** by raising questions with parliamentary candidates questions about militarism and war, peace and justice.

The **Network of Christian Peace Organisations (NCPO)** is a UK-based ecumenical network committed to peace as central to the meaning of church community. We are a broad group of organisations in the Christian peace tradition committed to furthering peace and encouraging our churches to support the peace movement. **Find out more at:** <https://ncpo.org.uk/>

We are called as Christians to be peacemakers; to love not just our neighbours but also our enemies; to care for those marginalised by society and be good stewards of all God's creation. We believe we are called to work unceasingly for a world in which all God's children are treated fairly and with respect –

and where unbridled human greed, violence and animosity towards the 'other' are no longer acceptable in a civilised society.

Our vision of peace is based on right relationships between people and with God: on justice, trust, mercy and respect. As people of faith we have a responsibility to turn our vision into something real by engaging in nonviolent work for political change that will ensure the common good. The run-up to the General Election is an important opportunity for this.

In this briefing note, we are sharing reflections on some issues of concern to us along with some possible questions and points to raise during the election period. These these are grouped under the following headings: *Human and planetary security, Nuclear weapons, The UK and the world, Welcoming refugees and migration justice, and Pathways to peace.*

What you can do

- **Work with other churches and local groups** to arrange a pre-election meeting with candidates. Use this guide to help you frame questions. Some guidance for hosting a hustings event is available at: <https://jpit.uk/elections/hustings>
- **Use social media or write to local papers** and describe your vision of security for the UK and the world. Suggest that this issue be raised with election candidates.
- **Write to your own prospective candidates** and ask about their / their party's vision of security. Use this as a way-in to deeper discussion.
- **Organise a time of prayer** with other churches - that candidates will be guided by Gospel values and a commitment to the common good.
- **Make contact with one of the member organisations of NCPO** and keep in touch with peace and disarmament developments and opportunities all year round. - see <https://ncpo.org.uk/ncpo-members>

Human and planetary security

UK Government policy typically frames national security as security of the UK's territory, economic interests and institutions. 'Human security' emphasises security approaches that value the safety and wellbeing of ordinary people, nationally and internationally, working to collectively address the long-term causes of insecurity rather than just keep a lid on their symptoms.

A massive threat to the safety and wellbeing of all people is ecological breakdown: climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss are already having devastating impacts worldwide. The UK government spent £54.2 billion on the military in 2023-24: 7.2 times the budget for the Department of Energy Security on Net Zero, which is responsible for climate spending.

War and military activity also contribute to climate breakdown. This is through burning of vast amounts of fossil fuels, that are responsible for 5.5% of global emissions. War also devastates the natural environment, destroying ecosystems and polluting

lands, water and air. Military spending and production should be redirected towards climate action and to addressing poverty, both at home and internationally.

What you might ask

- Would you focus on human and planetary security in the next national security review?
- Can you justify spending more than the NATO target on military spending while so many people struggle with poverty, and while we risk not meeting our commitments to international climate finance and to cut domestic emissions?
- How would you address the role of the military and the arms industry in driving climate breakdown?

Read more

[Rethinking Security](#)

Global Campaign on Military Spending UK: [Militarism Fuels Climate Crisis](#)

Nuclear Weapons

We are approaching the 80th anniversary of the first use in warfare of nuclear weapons, with bombs dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.—During this election period, there are two major wars underway with one of the countries in each being nuclear armed states. The risks are great.

The 2017 United Nations Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) has created a new possibility and dynamic for stepping back and addressing the issues that sustain this dangerous path. The UK has not signed or ratified the treaty and is investing heavily in producing a replacement for the Trident nuclear weapons system. It is also believed that the UK, at the US base at Lakenheath in Suffolk, is again set to be a host for American nuclear weapons.

What you might ask

- Whether candidates would endorse the ICAN Pledge to work for the UK to sign and the UN

TPNW, joining 70 other states in a commitment to bring to and end the nuclear weapons era.

- What do they think about the possibility of US nuclear weapons again being sited on UK soil.
- Whether they would consider ending the process of renewal of the Trident nuclear weapons system and instead invest resources into strengthening diplomacy, and addressing climate change and global inequalities.

Read more

[About the TPNW](#)

and the [ICAN Parliamentary pledge](#)

CND information about:

[Lakenheath: RAF Lakenheath: US nuclear weapons return to Britain](#)

and [Trident: Scrap Trident: No replacement, no new warheads](#)

The UK and the World

Today, we are surrounded on all sides by outbreaks of militarised violence: Israel and Gaza, and Russia and Ukraine are those that feature more prominently in the news cycles. Meanwhile, devastating internal conflicts elsewhere in the world including Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Myanmar receive comparatively little media attention.

All too often, the response of the UK government to major conflicts has been to fuel the fire through the arms trade or through political promotion of military solutions rather than using its voice to advocate for peace and justice.

The International Court of Justice has said that there is a plausible risk that the crime of genocide is being committed as a result of the Israeli Government's ongoing assault in Gaza. Despite this the UK government has consistently prevaricated in calling for a ceasefire and continued to issue licences enabling British companies to export arms to Israel.

Within the UK itself, the government response to rising global tensions has been to announce a substantial increase in military spending, with the aim of bringing it to 2.5% of GDP by 2030. The stated aim is to put the UK 'on a war footing'. This is in the context of a cost-of-living

crisis in the UK with millions of children growing up in poverty and our public services struggling.

The main opposition party, Labour has similarly expressed support for an increase in arms spending. The Labour leader has said that defence is currently 'the number one issue for any government' and also pledges to raise military spending to 2.5% of GDP when resources allow.

What you might ask

- Will you advocate for an immediate Ceasefire in Gaza?
- How will you prioritise peaceful, diplomatic solutions to international tensions rather than a dangerous and costly arms race?
- Would you support establishment of the role of a Special Representative for Peace within with the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, to promote a positive vision of peace?

Read more

[UK Government April 2024 announcement on military spending](#)

[Labour aims to raise defence spending to 2.5% of GDP](#)

Welcoming Refugees and Migration Justice

For the Lord your God ... loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

(Deuteronomy 10:17-18 NRSV)

'I was a stranger and you welcomed me.'

(Matthew 25:35 NRSV)

Jesus is the migrant and refugee among us. We thus condemn any scapegoating of migrants in any government policies. We oppose any hostile or inhumane treatment of migrants when they arrive. We support their right to work, so migrants are able immediately to contribute both to the economy and their own welfare.

In addition, there are thousands of people across the country who have made the UK their home, but don't have British Citizenship. Most are here on long term visas, and many have children in our schools, work in our communities, and have committed their lives to the UK.

Currently, the path to British Citizenship is extremely long, complicated with unnecessary blockages, stressful, expensive, and a system that can drive people to destitution. There is a huge cost in terms of mental health.

Joining with Citizens UK, who have interviewed many people, our NCPO ask is this:

We want a pathway to citizenship which is timely, affordable and fair. This would transform lives, allow people to participate fully in society, and strengthen our democracy.

What you might ask

- Does your language as a candidate respect the human rights of migrants and refugees or scapegoat them?
- Do you support the right of immigrants to work so they can contribute immediately to their own welfare and that of the community?
- Do you support a pathway to British citizenship that is timely, affordable, and fair?

Read more

Citizens UK: [Migrant communities - a pathway to citizenship](#)

Refugee Action: [Refugee Action](#)

Pathways to peace

The rhetoric around many of the issues in the current election campaign can feel divisive and hurtful, leaving members of our communities feeling dehumanised or marginalised. In recent years we have also witnessed the tragic death of two MPs and many have faced threats to themselves and their families. At a time of climate crisis, conflict and growing inequality, we are seeing a crackdown on the right to peaceful protest, alongside threats to withdraw from conventions on human rights.

How do we begin, then, on a pathway to foster peace at home and abroad in this current context? The United Kingdom has signed up to the Sustainable Development Goals, with goal 4.7 calling amongst other things for education that promotes nonviolence and peace. How different our society might look if all schools implemented peace education practices, focusing on peace at all levels! With our education sectors being different across the four nations and some teachers fearful of being

seen as too political, the implementation and scope of peace education is varied. Despite this, there are many organisations and passionate teachers working to promote peace education, critical thinking and active citizenship, which can be woven into the curriculum and school community in multiple ways. For more information on peace education in schools, have a look at the report *Peace at the Heart* (<https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/peace-at-the-heart>) from Quakers in Britain

What you might ask

- How have you led your campaign to avoid hurtful and divisive rhetoric?
- How would your party work to mend broken relationships in society and make sure everyone feels valued and heard?
- Would you encourage schools to engage with peace education to build a more peaceful society?



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