

Women in Black UK

Spring - Summer 2019 Newsletter

It was a privilege and a pleasure to share in the celebration of the 25th anniversary of Leuven Women in Black (WiB) on 2 March 2019. Together with WiBs from many countries including Armenia, Austria, Croatia, England, France, Germany, Israel, Scotland, Serbia and Spain, we commemorated 25 years of vigils and actions Leuven women have taken against war and violence. One of the most amazing parts of the event was when each woman explained her experiences and connection with WiB, and we then discussed how we could support Armenian Women in Black who will be organising the next Gathering. After we all stood in a powerful vigil with our banners and placards outside Leuven's City Hall of about 100 people, we then participated in a public event where speakers talked about Women in Black's origins in Jerusalem, opposing nationalism, militarism and violence against women as war ravaged the former Yugoslavia, lesbian feminists in the peace movement, feminism and non-violent resistance, songs, and poems. Where there is so much glorification of war, it was wonderful to join our Leuven sisters and mark this anniversary of protest and resistance against the patriarchy and violence. Photos of the celebration can be seen here:

https://pbase.com/lievesnellings/wib_leuven_25th_anniversary

Thanks to Jackie Lukes for writing to us to tell us about the speech she gave at the Interfaith Women's Day on Saturday 16 March in Hull. In the speech, Jackie spoke about the origin of Women in Black in Jerusalem as an example of the strategies that women on 'opposite' sides can develop to oppose war and to live together in peace.

Korean Women Cross DMZ and the Nobel Women's Initiative asked Women in Black to sign a letter to Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un ahead of their meeting in Vietnam in February. In the letter we asked both leaders to establish a peace process towards the signing of a peace agreement to end the Korean War and to include women and civil society in that process. To read the letter, please follow this link:

<https://nobelwomensinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Trump-Kim-Letter-FINAL.pdf>

Women in Black Oxford gathered for a Christmas vigil, during which they sang "O Broken Town of Bethlehem" and other Pal-ternative carols sourced by Now Oxford, Sea Green Singers, Oxford PSC and other local groups. Thanks to the generosity of passers-by, they raised £148.61 to support the vital work of Medical Aid Palestine.

During the first months of the year, London Women in Black have repeatedly held vigils asking the British government to stop selling arms to Saudi Arabia, weapons that are then used against civilians in Yemen. On 9-11 April the Court of Appeal heard the case of the Campaign Against the Arms Trade against the UK Government on the illegality of these arms sales. To learn more about CAAT's appeal, please go to:

<https://blog.caat.org.uk/2019/04/09/in-the-court-of-appeal-stop-arming-saudi/>

Cynthia Cockburn is currently writing a book about the history of WiB groups around the world. One of her interviewees, Teresa Aristizabal from Ruta Pacífica, the group that regularly holds WiB vigils in Colombia, asked her to pass this message to you all: "we say we a lot of pride that we are part of the international movement called Women in Black and this generates respect among politicians, journalists, etc. ... When we are feeling down, when we ask ourselves which direction Colombia is taking, we tell each other: let's not forget the women of Sarajevo, let's not forget the

women of Palestine, let's not forget the women who have also lived through war, and that immediately makes us alive. We just need to say: Women in Black and we stand up from wherever we are".

Please let the newsletter know what you or your WiB group is doing. We value your comments:
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