

CAMPAIGN

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Kirsty O'Connor / HM Treasury via Flickr

Spending billions on defence won't restore stability

CND General Secretary Sophie Bolt looks at how defence spending factored in the Autumn Budget.

The new British Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, talked a great deal about how Labour's budget would restore stability. Whilst there were some positive shifts away from the previous government's economic priorities – some investment for hospitals and schools, raising the minimum wage – when it comes to defence, Labour is continuing with the

Conservatives' spending priorities and escalatory policies. Far from creating stability, pouring billions more into the military and replacing Trident will only exacerbate domestic and global insecurity.

Announcing an increase in military spending by £2.9bn, it's clear Labour's priority is getting Britain to the 2.5% GDP pledge



Campaign
for Nuclear
Disarmament

020 7700 2393
enquiries@cnduk.org
cnduk.org

162 Holloway Rd
London
N7 8DQ

made by Rishi Sunak in April and reaffirmed in the Labour's Strategic Defence Review which is a 'root and branch' defence review 'within the trajectory to 2.5%' spending. This increase is on top of year-on-year, inflation-busting increases that have nothing to do with defending the British population and everything to do with following a US foreign policy that risks dragging Britain into further wars and nuclear confrontation.

The government had already pledged to continue funding the crisis in Ukraine to the tune of £3bn every year for 'as long as it takes', a conflict which threatens to escalate into an all-out war between NATO and Russia.

If the new Chancellor really wanted to get control of public spending, she would only need to end the Trident replacement programme. Not only is this driving nuclear proliferation, it is draining Britain's public finances with its out-of-control spending.

According to a House of Commons Library Briefing, 'The cost of the UK's strategic nuclear deterrent', published in August, '...the Public Accounts Committee expressed concern over the stability of the

plan and the ability of the department to control costs in its largest programmes, including Dreadnought. It suggested, with concern, that the MOD views the contingency fund "as a blank cheque, freeing it from the need to control costs".'

Meanwhile, 4.3 million children – that's 30% of all children in Britain – continue to live in poverty because of Labour's refusal to remove the two child benefit cap – a policy that would lift a quarter of a million children out of poverty. And, over the past ten years, 250,000 older people have died from the cold because they couldn't afford to heat their homes. A failure to restore the universal fuel allowance will continue to result in such deaths.

We know that these ruthless economic priorities are shaped by Britain's military and nuclear adherence to US military and economic priorities, enshrined by the Mutual Defence Agreement – recently extended indefinitely – as well as Britain's membership to NATO. Our campaigning to end this so-called 'special relationship' has never been more critical, and central to this is scrapping Trident and its replacement.

Spotlight

This month: Rochdale and Littleborough CND



There are fantastic CND groups across the country campaigning hard for a more peaceful and safer world for us all. One of these is Rochdale and Littleborough Peace Group who have had an incredibly busy – and diverse – year. As well as campaigning against nuclear weapons they have taken action on Palestine and the climate, highlighted military production during a by-election, shown solidarity with political activists in Turkey, participated in an exhibition against NATO, attended marches, and written articles for the press (amongst many other activities). Phew!

If you live locally and would like to get involved with this work, please get in touch, they would love to hear from you. Phone 01706 370117 or email patsanchez@phonecoop.coop.

THE TIME IS NOW FOR A WMD-FREE ZONE

By Emad Kiyaei & Sharon Dolev for Middle East Treaty Organisation (METO)

Ongoing conflicts across the Middle East underscore the region's fragile stability and the urgent need for disarmament and diplomacy. The current violence not only exacerbates human suffering but also raises the risk of wider regional chaos, reinforcing the necessity of a comprehensive approach to peace and security.

A key initiative addressing these issues is the proposed Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone (WMDZFZME). Originally introduced by Egypt in 1990 with Iranian support, the Zone aims to eliminate chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons from all 22 Arab countries, as well as Iran and Israel. The 1995 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) conference linked progress on the Zone to the treaty's indefinite extension.

Despite early momentum, progress stalled for years. However, in 2018, the UN General Assembly authorised an annual conference led by the Secretary-General to negotiate a treaty establishing the Zone. This meeting is scheduled each November until a binding agreement is reached. The inaugural 2019 session, held at UN Headquarters in New York, brought together Arab states, Iran, and four nuclear powers (China, France, Russia, and the UK), though the US and Israel declined participation. These discussions have continued annually, with the fifth session planned for November 2024.

The dual-track negotiation format offers multiple benefits: it supports trust-building and cooperation among regional states, relieves NPT discussions from the regional impasse, and creates a platform for eventual Israeli involvement. All decisions

are reached by consensus, providing an inclusive forum for discussions and the possibility of future Israeli inclusion.

Such regional initiatives are foreseen under Article VII of the NPT and are crucial for achieving the treaty's non-proliferation (Articles I & II) and disarmament (Article VI) objectives. The last session, held in November 2023 amid Palestine-Israel violence, managed to withstand the regional turmoils and concluded an outcome document adopted by consensus, agreeing to continue discussions.

As immediate recommendations, the Middle East Treaty Organization (METO) calls on stakeholders preparing for the upcoming fifth session of the November Conference to:

- Recognise the mutually reinforcing nature of non-proliferation, disarmament, and regional peace initiatives.
- Urge Britain to adopt positive language in support of the conference.
- Recognise regional treaties' role in reducing nuclear weapon proliferation, use, and misuse risks.
- Urge nuclear weapons states to pursue disarmament in good faith with a clear timeline.
- Support initiatives that reinforce non-proliferation and disarmament goals, including the annual UN-led conference on the WMD-Free Zone.

The Zone negotiations affirm that disarmament begins with a conversation. Continued engagement in this UN-led conference reflects the region's resilience and commitment to a WMD-free Middle East.

What's on: For a full, updated list of events, see cnduk.org/events/

Artists against the Bomb exhibit launch night

6 November 7pm
The Dorothy Pax, Victoria Quays, Sheffield
■ info@yorkshirecnd.org.uk

'The Priest's Tale' performance

7 November 7pm, Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh

'Peace History and Museums' conference

9 November 9:30am-5pm, Peace Museum, Salts Mill, Saltaire
■ info@yorkshirecnd.org.uk

Songs for Peace

10 November 1pm
Bradford Cenotaph, Prince's Way, Bradford
■ info@yorkshirecnd.org.uk

'No to US nuclear weapons returning to Lakenheath' public meeting

14 November 7pm, Oxford Town Hall, St Aldate's, Oxford
■ nualayoung@hotmail.com

Yorkshire CND Peace and Craft Fair

16 November 10am-4pm, Victoria Hall, Saltaire, Shipley
■ info@yorkshirecnd.org.uk

Stop the Telford Arms Fair!

20 November, outside Telford International Centre
■ wmcndall@gmail.com

CND Peace Education School Speakers Network development day

23 November 10:30am-4:30pm, Scotia Works, Leadmill Road, Sheffield
■ peaceeducation@cnduk.org

Northern CND/peace groups gathering

23 November 12 noon-4pm, East Street Arts, St Mary's Lane, Leeds
■ info@yorkshirecnd.org.uk

Get your CND Christmas cards!

Spread festive cheer and the gift of peace with the official CND Christmas cards! They're sold in packs of 6, envelopes included (card size 125mm x 125mm). Inside of card is blank for your message.

Available to purchase on the CND online shop on our website.



Meet the staff

This month: *Sophie Bolt*, General Secretary

"It is a huge privilege to take on the role of General Secretary of CND. I would like to thank Kate Hudson, our outgoing General Secretary, for her incredible leadership over the last 23 years.

An active member of CND since the late 1990s, I have been part of CND's leadership for over 20 years. I know that our campaign is facing incredible challenges. The threat of nuclear war is higher than it has been since the Cold War. But I also know – from reading Kate's vital history of CND – that it is in these most dangerous times that public opposition to nuclear weapons has been at its most effective.

CND's members are the life-blood of our campaign. I know how hard everyone is working to build our movement. I am so looking forward to campaigning with you all. Together, we can meet these global challenges and secure the peaceful, sustainable, nuclear-free future the world so desperately needs."



Leicester CND AGM and public meeting

25 November 4pm, Friends Meeting House, 16 Queens Road, Leicester
■ anthony.matthew@tiscali.co.uk

Peace and Craft Fair

30 November 11am-4pm
Birch Community Centre, Brighton Grove, Manchester
■ gmdcnd@gn.apc.org

Lakenheath Alliance for

Peace vigil 30 November 12 noon-2pm, Main Gate at RAF Lakenheath, Brandon Road.
■ vigils@lakenheathallianceforpeace.org.uk

Faringdon Peace Group meeting

4 December 7:30pm. Location TBC
■ 01367 710308

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