



In & Around the UN

An Update from the Quaker United Nations Office

June 2017

US funding threats make upholding the UN ever more important

Seventy years ago, the Quakers were one of the first non-governmental organizations to establish a permanent presence at the United Nations in New York, judging the new institution to be of vital importance in efforts to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.” While imperfect, the UN has largely been successful in terms of its original mandate. Now, however, there are growing concerns that the UN’s work may see significant cuts if the US administration acts on its threats to decrease support and funding.

This concern follows the release of proposals, including a draft Executive Order and draft legislation from the House and Senate, that call for stark cuts in funding and potentially changing the way the US engages with the UN. We saw the first steps of the threats becoming reality when, on March 30th, the US withdrew funding to the UN Population Fund, which works worldwide to carry out lifesaving women’s health programming.

While the larger impact of the threats remains to be seen, the world should care about the risk facing the UN. The UN provides the only space for all countries to be represented on an equal footing to lend their voice to issues facing the world. Through its life-saving work, the UN supports the ever-growing number of people in need of humanitarian assistance. By adopting the Paris Climate Change Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States are striving to take the steps needed to preserve the earth,



United Nations Secretariat Building

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and to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies. These are but a few examples of the breadth of work carried out by this global body, which would be drastically affected by cuts from the US.

There is much that can be done to show support to the UN, and there many organizations that can provide further information on how to do just that. To learn more about the UN’s work, how the US has contributed, and how to lend your support, read our recent publication “[Threats to United States Support for the United Nations: An Overview](#),” which we will continue to update. ❖

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QUNO takes part in the historic Women's March



QUNO joins the New York Women's March.

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Saturday, January 21st, 2017, marked a historic moment in New York, in the country, and in the world. Over two hundred and fifty thousand people took part in the Women's March in New York City, just one of many marches in solidarity with the D.C. rally which drew half a million people. Coincidentally, the New York March began at the Dag Hammarskjöld building on 47th Street, right across from Quaker House, which has stood as a beacon to Quaker work at the United Nations since 1953.

The crowd started gathering at 10.00am and, by 11.00am, all one could see from the Quaker House

window was a pink sea of banners, hats, scarves, all in support for women all over the world. Several Quaker Meetings, including New York Yearly Meeting and Flushing Meeting, joined the QUNO staff, who had been chosen to lead the fourth wave of the march. By 2:00pm, Quaker House had become a sanctuary for Friends. The QUNO staff, together with the tireless efforts of Ursula Tomlinson, wife of QUNO Director Andrew Tomlinson, offered food, drinks, and a place to rest for the growing crowd of Friends as they waited for their turn to join the march.

For many, this was a day to stand

in solidarity not only with women, but with all marginalized communities around the world. Many participants carried signs with messages like: "Women's rights are human rights" and

"Quakers for equality, peace, and togetherness"

When it was finally time to join the march, the QUNO staff, holding a banner with the message "We are the Quaker presence at the United Nations," led the fourth wave.

On the other side of the world, in Stockholm, Sweden, QUNO's Office Coordinator and a member of QUNO's Committee joined the Stockholm March. ❖

A timely visit to the Middle East



A view over Gaza City, February 2017.

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QUNO's Director, joined AFSC's head of International Programs in a journey to Palestine and Jordan. This timely and challenging trip included visits to Gaza, Hebron, Jerusalem and Ramallah, followed by several days with AFSC partners in Jordan working with Syrian and other refugees.

To visit Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (oPT) today is a jarring and sobering experience. Most extraordinary in the oPT are the elaborate systems of social control and exclusion, not only physical (the separation wall, military checkpoints, restrictions on access to basic services) but legal and economic. The deliberate fragmentation of the West Bank as a result of continuing expansion of the settlements (illegal under international law) makes it impossible for any Palestinian to live a normal life, stunts economic development, and limits any possibility of broader Palestinian cohesion or a sense of shared identity.

The United Nations has been deeply involved in the Middle East

since its founding, and UN actors continue to be engaged across the region in humanitarian action, refugee support, and development initiatives, as well as political work. Middle East issues have also been at the heart of many of the systemic challenges that the UN

faces, including the use of the veto in the security council.

Increasingly, the Middle East has to be viewed as a single conflict system, with deep systemic violence sporadically erupting into increasingly destructive direct violence and displacement. The Middle East provides a prime example of how the international community finds itself overwhelmed by immediate crisis management, while distracted from long term efforts to build and support more resilient and sustainable social systems that foster peace, justice and inclusion. Meanwhile, the failure of 'realpolitik' approaches demands a more consistent use of an objective lens based on human rights, including an insistence on all state actors living up to their obligations under international humanitarian law, including those under the Geneva conventions.

Quaker perspectives on the region remain as they have always been, to support the journey towards sustainable peace and justice that respects

How to Support QUNO

QUNO welcomes donations to help cover the cost of its work. We are happy to accept contributions towards two areas of our work:

The Fund for Quaker House: the endowment supports the maintenance and operation of Quaker House.

QUNO Operating and Program Expenses: contributions can be made toward the cost of our annual budget.

Please make your check payable to "QUNO." If you'd like your gift to go towards Quaker House, please write "Quaker House" in the memo portion of the check.

For credit card gifts, call toll free 1-888-588-2372 ext.1 , or click the "[Donations](#)" button on our web site and follow the instructions provided.

Please send checks to:
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the needs and aspirations of all children, women and men in the Middle East, irrespective of their race, religion, origin or gender. ❖

Letter from the Director

Dear Friends:

Violent conflict in today's world destroys lives and devastates societies, disproportionately impacting civilians and driving record levels of displacement. Such conflict acts like development in reverse, setting back progress on stability and prosperity by decades. By 2030, two thirds of the world's poorest people will live in regions affected by conflict and state weakness.

This year started on a high note for the UN, with the new Secretary General, António Guterres, bringing fresh energy to making the UN a more effective organization. He started his term with announcing a sharp focus on prevention, bringing attention to the need to find ways of shifting the international community's efforts from last minute crisis

response to policy and practice that center on the longer term fostering of peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

By the end of January, however, the incoming US administration brought new challenges and complexity to the UN as well as to international relations more broadly. Proposals have emerged to substantially defund the UN and to withdraw from UN processes such as the Human Rights Council. While it is hard at this point to assess the degree of risk to the UN, it is clear that there has been a decisive shift from a US willing to work in collaboration with the international community on global issues, such as climate change, and take diplomatic risks for peace (as in Iran and Cuba), to one driven by a more nationalistic and confrontational ideology.

In his recent statements, the new

Secretary General identifies two core issues: a surge in preventive diplomacy to respond more effectively to early signs of tension; and the need to focus on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the new Sustaining Peace resolutions as essential to longer term prevention. QUNO is engaged right across these agendas, convening civil society actors and working directly with UN officials and diplomats to ensure that shorter term crisis response mechanisms are aligned with longer term efforts to foster peace, justice and inclusion around the world.

Thank you for your support.



Andrew Tomlinson

An update from our Geneva office

Our Human Rights and Refugees Program has been heavily involved in the process towards developing a new international agreement on migration. This new agreement, called the “Global Compact on safe, orderly, and regular migration,” is due to be adopted at the UN in 2018. Its purpose would be to improve international cooperation on migration, in response to the chaotic way it is currently managed, as seen by the appalling and devastating treatment of people seeking solely to better their lives.

QUNO Geneva is working tirelessly to ensure that the

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Then-Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses the UN high-level summit on large movements of refugees and migrants. © UN Photo/Cia Pak

Reflections on Somali refugees by UN Representative

Flying into Nairobi, Kenya, is a spectacular view. I am always excited visiting Africa. Though Kenya is 1,200 miles from where I was born, in Harare, Zimbabwe, I always feel “at home” when I am on the continent.

The main reason for the trip was for myself and Hafsa Maalim, one of our outgoing Program Assistants, to participate in the American Friends Service Committee Dialogue and Exchange Program. The meeting focused on the implications for Somali refugees once the Dadaab camp closes. Dadaab, the largest refugee camp in the world, is nestled in northeastern Kenya and it is currently home to an estimated 350,000 refugees. It was opened in 1991 as a temporary shelter for people fleeing civil war in neighboring Somalia.

Now, Dadaab camp is being closed, after years of prolonged violence and insecurity turned the camp into a sprawling tent city. The question we were all asking at this meeting, which brought together civil society and government, regional and UN representatives, was what would it mean to close Dadaab and what



QUNO's UN Representative at the AFSC Somalia Dialogue and Exchange Program. © AFSC

realistic options do 350,000 people have, many of whom have spent most of their lives in this camp?

Through interactive group work sessions, participants explored the implications of voluntary return, local integration, and resettlement of refugees and internally displaced people. During the three days, we shared our perspectives on actions that could be taken by asylum and host countries to ensure protection of refugees. The challenges facing

local integration efforts for refugee populations were discussed. We also highlighted potential entry points to overcome such challenges, including the development of trauma healing and reconciliation programs that can bring communities together.

I learned so much about the region in my interaction with former refugees and civil society practitioners and I hope to continue bringing to light the work of Friends on this issue. ❖

Geneva office update
(Continued from page 4)

Global Compact is ambitious, people-centered and grounded in international human rights law. To this end, we have been using Quaker House to hold conversations with a range of different

actors involved in the process and coordinating a group of Geneva-based civil society organizations concerned about the human rights of migrants. While the topic is clearly contentious, and difficult for many UN Member States to find common ground

on, the agreement presents a real opportunity to improve how people on the move are treated.

Over the next year, QUNO hopes to continue to play a considerable role towards shaping a positive outcome in the process. ❖

Reaching out to our Quaker community



Anna Mijnlief, Program Assistant, and Rachel Madenyika, UN Representative for the Prevention of Violent Conflict, attended Quaker Witness Day in Brooklyn, NY.

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The past few months have been a busy time for QUNO, not least because we have had the chance to spend time with Friends. It has been our pleasure connecting with Quakers, meeting Friends based in New York and Friends visiting from across the USA, and indeed the globe. We have appreciated the invitations we've received to participate in events and share more about our work to represent Friends at the UN.

In February, we welcomed the Quaker Youth Leadership Conference, a group of students from Canada, the USA, and the UK, to Quaker House. Our Program Assistants, Anna Mijnlief and Hafsa Maalim, shared more on the role of Quakers at the UN, including how we incorporate Quaker values and practices into our work. We also

discussed the role Program Assistants play at QUNO, particularly outlining what a typical workday might look like. Hafsa and Anna enjoyed sharing about their experience at QUNO and providing some insight into what work looks like for young people at a Quaker organization.

The following month, Anna and Rachel Madenyika, QUNO's UN Representative for the Prevention of Violent Conflict, attended Quaker Witness Day in Brooklyn, NY. The event was organized by Friends from Brooklyn Meeting in collaboration with Brooklyn Friends School. Anna and Rachel met with four classes, two in the high school and two with younger students. In the evening, we met with Friends at Brooklyn Meeting, where we shared about what led us to

work on peace issues. Speaking with students of all ages on the value of the UN was interesting, especially considering some of the students shared with us their participation in the Model UN. Insightful questions came from all places, and we valued the opportunity to have discussions with young students on the UN's merits, and the Quaker voice at the UN.

QUNO also welcomed the opportunity to have a presence at the American Friends Service Committee Centennial celebration, held in April. Our Program Assistants staffed a table and had the opportunity to speak with many Friends about QUNO's work. QUNO was honored to be part of AFSC's celebrations, and looks forward to working closely with AFSC for the century to come. ❖