The importance of a vibrant and powerful anti-war movement cannot be understated

Stop the War Coalition held its national conference on Saturday, filling up the Arlington Hall in London. The conference took place against the background of a 17-year long war in the Middle East and a number of crisis flashpoints across vast areas of the world. Stop the War delegations from groups and affiliated organisations, as well as individual members from across the country - from Edinburgh to Ceredigion and from Chester to Bournemouth - were in attendance. A range of speakers from the Middle East and Britain addressed the conference, providing valuable analysis of the international and domestic situation and ideas on how the anti-war movement should respond. The speeches were accompanied by further discussion and contributions from the floor.

The first session, which was introduced by writer, public intellectual and veteran of the anti-Vietnam War movement Tariq Ali, Unite chief of staff and former chair of Stop the War Andrew Murray, the general Secretary of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament Kate Hudson, the convenor of the Voices for Creative Nonviolence Maya Evans and Stop, Emma Dent Coad MP for Kensington the War convenor Lindsey German, was centred around the theme of "opposing war and racism in the era of Trump". A number of speakers and contributors from the floor discussed the dangers associated with Theresa May government's attempts to totally subordinate UK foreign policy to US interests. New threats were also highlighted, including the sabre-rattling over Iran, the danger of Trump's trade wars spilling into military conflict, as well as the dangerous move in US nuclear weapons' policy towards the extension of scenarios in which the US would be prepared to deploy nuclear weapons, accompanied by technological developments which facilitate the deployment of these horrendous weapons.

Several speakers remarked that Stop the War's analysis has been proven correct time and time again, including in relation to the war in Libya. This is a conflict which the political and media mainstream initially perceived to be entirely uncontroversial as it

ignored Stop the War's warning that it would lead to a calamitous outcome - both in terms of direct casualties and an enormous refugee crisis as a result of the war. Emphasis was laid – both in individual contributions and in resolutions that were passed - on Stop the War's determination to continue to provide solidarity to the Palestinians especially in the context of the ongoing attacks on Corbyn over this issue.

The conference resolved that Stop the War should continue to campaign about a broad set of issues, including against the UK government's continued war-making in the Middle East, against growing threats of a US-led war against Iran, for an end to the British government's fuelling of the war in Yemen through arms sales to Saudi Arabia and in other ways, as well as in defence of Palestinian rights and in defence of Jeremy Corbyn's attempts to bring about an anti-war government.

The second session largely focused on imperialism, occupation and war in the Middle East today. It was introduced by Kim Sharif, who is a solicitor and Director of the organisation Human Rights for Yemen, by Saeed Shehabi, Bahraini author, journalist and member of the Bahrain Freedom Movement,. The session discussed the ongoing war and humanitarian catastrophe which is afflicting Yemen, and for which the Western powers backing the Saudi-led bombing and siege of Yemen bear much responsibility. UK support for the repressive Bahraini dictatorship was also highlighted.

The final session, which mostly focused on building Stop the War, was introduced by Kevin Courtney, the joint General Secretary of the National Education Union (NEU), specialist on the Asia Pacific region Jenny Clegg, and by Stop the War's vice chair Chris Nineham. The session began with an analysis of the militarisation of the Asia Pacific region, a dangerous process in which the UK is also beginning to take part, as well as of the enormous waste of resources on the military budget while education, healthcare and social care are facing savage cuts.

It was emphasised that the anti-war movement has had a massive impact in helping to build broad anti-war sentiment in Britain, which is a major obstacle to the pursuit of further wars. However, it

was also pointed out that in the context of the highly belligerent Trump presidency, the possibility of an anti-war government and of relentless attacks on Jeremy Corbyn over the questions of foreign policy, strengthening and deepening the anti-war movement is an urgent necessity. It is also necessary to make the links between the government's pro-war policies and other social problems, including racism. This is why Stop the War is supporting the National Unity Demonstration against Fascism and Racism on 17th November.

The discussion on building Stop the War emphasised the need to strengthen Stop the War's presence across the country, to increase and widen Stop the War's reach, impact and membership base, to expand Stop the War's online activity, and to develop the anti-war network locally and nationally. Conference urged groups to make sure they have regular and ambitious meetings, to maintain a street presence, to be engaged in reaching out to and gaining support from local trade union branches, from Labour Party and other political organisations and community groups in every single area.

As one of the delegates said, we are in a very contradictory situation in which the majority of the population is against war and supports Palestinians, yet very few voices in the mainstream, either in parliament or in the media, represent that opinion. This is where the importance of a vibrant and powerful anti-war movement lies.

The full list of resolutions passed at the conference

Stop the War Coalition AGM 2018: Resolutions

The Stop the War Coalition annual general meeting on 8 September 2018 passed the following motions.

Motion 1: Stop the War Coalition Officers' Group Motion

 1) The era of Trump in the White House is not leading as some predicted to greater isolation, but to great instability, an aggressive foreign policy, and growing rivalry with other world players. US foreign policy carries the risk of major new wars. 2) Direct involvement and intervention in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan has increased. Support for

Saudi Arabia and its catastrophic war in Yemen has been stepped up. Trump's attempts to end the Iran nuclear deal and his imposition of sanctions have raised the already sky-high levels level of tension in the Middle East. An alliance between Israel, Saudi Arabia and the US threatens a war on Iran and further attacks on the Palestinian people. 3) Despite appearances of de-escalation over the Korean peninsula, there is still a highly dangerous situation there, with conflict between the US and China an ongoing issue. 4) The War on Terror has been a prime cause of the refugee crisis in Europe, and is one of the main drivers of the increasing Islamophobia and racism in British society - issues that must be linked to our anti-war campaigning. 5) Stop the War is committed to opposing government foreign policy in support of these wars and has mobilised repeatedly. Such opposition does not imply support for any other regime but the recognition that the anti-war movement must oppose the British government's policies first and foremost. 6) Stop the War played an important part in the protests against Trump during his visit in July, working alongside many other organisations. The demonstrations were highly successful in mobilising very large numbers, showing the possibility of building mass campaigns over issues such as war and racism. 7) Stop the War commits to organising and campaigning, through publicity, briefings, meetings and protests where appropriate, against the British government's warmongering role in the Middle East, parts of Africa and Afghanistan.

Motion 2: Labour CND Motion On Increased Risk Of Nuclear Confrontation

1. Stop the War AGM 2018:
a) welcomes initiatives by South Korea to encourage dialogue on the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula and promote harmonious relations between the two Koreas;
b) regrets the lack of progress denuclearisation talks between the US and North Korea are making; and
c) believes the denuclearisation of entire Peninsula would be an important first step in promoting long-term peace in the region.

2. This AGM also:
d) notes with concern US withdrawal from the Iran nuclear agreement, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA);
e) welcomes attempts by other parties to the agreement to ensure its continuation; and
f) regrets the re-imposition of a harsh sanctions region which call into question the ability of European signatories to maintain the JCOPA.

3. This AGM further notes the recent US National Security Strategy (December 2017) and Nuclear Posture Review (February 2018) which:
(i) expand the circumstances in which nuclear weapons might be used to include 'significant non-nuclear strategic attacks'; and
(ii) commit to further developing a new generation of so-called low-yield nuclear weapons.

4. This AGM recognises that these events increase the possibility of military confrontation in which the potential use of nuclear weapons is posed, and therefore decides to work closely with CND and Labour CND to highlight these issues.

Motion 3: Birmingham Stop the War Coalition Motion

The StWC AGM notes:

1. The intense campaign by right wing Labour groups and Zionists groups promoted by most of the right wing press on the anti-semitism issue focused on discrediting and forcing out Jeremy Corbyn from his position as Labour leader.

2. The demand that the Labour Party adopts the full version of the IHRA definition of anti-semitism including the examples one of which states that it is anti-semitic to argue that Israel is a racist state.

2. Most towns and cities in Israel are for Israeli Jews only and community groups have a legal right to object to new entrants, there was a demonstration in a northern Israeli city recently of hundreds of Israeli Jews objecting to the fact that an Israeli Arab man had bought a house in their area. This mirrors the group areas arrangement in Apartheid South Africa where communities were segregated as white, coloured and black areas. Jewish schools are funded 3-4 times more per pupil than Israeli Arab schools, and transport expenditure in Arab areas is only 7% of the national total whereas the Israeli Arab community make up 20% of the population. (source article by Jonathan Freedland, the Guardian in the Jewish Chronicle 23.3.18.)

4. The calls by President Donald Trump and the British Parliament's Defence Select committee for a big increase in British arms expenditure (an increase to 3% of the GNP at a cost of £17 billion) supported by a significant group of right wing Labour MPs.

Agrees:

1. Stop the War Coalition is opposed to anti-semitism in all its forms and welcomes the contribution over many years of Jewish comrades in building the Anti-War movement. However we reject the application of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance full definition of anti-semitism because one of its examples argues that to regard Israel as a racist state is anti-semitic.

2. To encourage local StWC groups to hold public meetings in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle and send speakers to Labour Party and Momentum groups.

3. To encourage local StWC groups possibly in cooperation with Labour Party and Momentum groups to hold public meetings to oppose the big increases in arms expenditure as proposed by President Trump and a section of right wing Labour MPs.

Motion 4: Murad Qureshi's Motion Against US Sanctions And Trade Wars

A key feature of the Trump administration's US Foreign Policy has been the use of sanctions and trade wars.

1. A trade war with China was a theme during Trump's presidential election campaign and he has continued in that vein since being elected with a "tit for tat" tariff war between the US & China in full progress now.

2. The US has implemented Trade sanctions following Trump's decision in May to renege on the landmark 2015 deal to curtail Iranian Nuclear Deal, sending the message to the rest of the world including Europe "trade with Iran and you won't trade with the US".

3. US trade sanctions on Turkey are being used over its refusal to release an American evangelical pastor causing a major US-Turkey rift.

4. US trade sanctions against Venezuela has resulted in them not been able to sell their government debt in global markets, so crippling their economy further.

We only have to look at instances like the Opium Wars historically to see how often

Trade wars lead to military conflicts when gunboat diplomacy was deployed by the UK after arguments about trade access for Opium into China. Such sanctions and trade wars are often the prelude to military war itself and should be condemned in the strongest terms.

Motion 5: South Tyneside Stop the War Coaliton Motion

Recognising that Stop the War continues to fight for an anti-war government in Britain with campaigns such as the successful "Why We Need an Anti-War Government Tour". Recognising that Stop the War passed a motion in 2006, "the Stop War Coalition resolves to place on the agenda the demand for anti-war government as a constitutional matter that no such wars of aggression can be advocated, or supported in word or deed, that ensures that Britain ends its collaboration in all aggressive military alliances with the United States, Europe and other countries; that it renounces the use of force in resolving and settling conflicts in international affairs amongst nations and pursues an anti-war policy in international affairs."

"That it forthwith withdraws all of its troops from foreign soil and outlaws the stationing of British troops on foreign soil; that it stops the breaches of the Nuclear Non Proliferation treaty and ensures its implementation in Britain with elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and that the government pays reparations for the crimes it has committed in Iraq and other countries."

Conference therefore calls on Stop the War and the Steering Committee to continue and step up the work to elaborate in the movement the democratic nature of an anti-war government in Britain, that the people's participation is essential, and that there is a need for people to be empowered to retain the initiative against the big power warmongers in Britain and elsewhere.

Motion 6: Wandsworth Stop the War Coalition Motion

"Conference calls on the Stop the War Coalition to support unconditionally the right of the Palestinian People to self-determination. That right continues to be denied by violent repression by the Israeli state, with the active collaboration of US and UK governments. Whilst Stop the War condemns anti-Semitism and all forms of racism Conference also condemns the campaign which equates support for the Palestinian struggle and criticism of the Israeli regime with anti-Semitism. This is being used as a cynical attempt to gag opponents of Israeli policy and is being deployed more widely to stigmatise the Left. Conference calls on branches to support and organise initiatives in solidarity with the people of Palestine and their resistance.

Motion 7: West London Stop the War Coalition Motion

This AGM notes that the War on Terror will be 17 years old next week, a generation of war. It has also proved to be a generator of war, a self perpetuating system where our foreign interventions produce an endless cycle of violence and retribution.

This AGM endorses Jeremy Corbyn's speech after the Manchester bombing last year where he identified the link between our government's foreign wars and terrorism at home, a link that Stop the War have correctly highlighted for many years.

This AGM proposes that a more accurate name for current UK policy should be "War OF Terror" rather than "War on Terror".

This AGM recognises that large numbers of people see the connection between military aggression abroad and terrorist attacks at home and calls on Stop the War to redouble efforts to achieve an anti-war foreign policy by
• lobbying MPs and trade unions to support the campaign.
• producing publicity and briefing material.
• organising nationwide public meetings.

Motion 8: Stop the War Coalition Officers' Group Motion

1) There is widespread understanding among people in Britain that the War on Terror has been a disaster and broad opposition to Trump's foreign policy and British support for it.

2) Support for Jeremy Corbyn is one expression of this. Most of Labour's membership is also sympathetic, but there is still a big debate. We need to maintain and strengthen Stop the War's presence throughout the country.

3) We have to widen our engagement to increase our impact and membership base. The office has widened links with MPs and produced more briefing material. Local groups should reach out to MPs, councillors, party branches and Momentum groups.

4) The office has helped co-ordinate successful speaking tours. We should continue this work ensuring the meetings have broad platforms including local MPs or councillors, members of Young Labour, commentators/cultural figures etc along with national Stop the War speakers. They should be set up well in advance in good venues and promoted widely on social media, on the streets, in unions and colleges.

5) Each group should organise regular petitioning sessions. They should also promote resolutions supporting our positions and calling for affiliation in trade unions, Labour Party/Momentum branches.

6) Since last year's conference we have…new members. We are asking all local groups to aim to recruit 20 new members by the end of the year.

7) We will expand our online operation, producing new video content and linking new media platforms. We urge groups to produce content locally – reports, articles, videos and memes.

8) This work will allow us to create new networks of support and get new activists involved in building the campaign in every area and it will ensure we are prepared to respond with mass protests should there be a new escalation or crisis.