

# Ground Zero

April 2024

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## Ground Zero honors MLK

By Glen Milner

Members of the [Resist US-Led War Movement](#) and Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action came together on January 13th to demonstrate against Trident nuclear weapons at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

About 35 demonstrators braved the 20 degree weather and voiced their desire for a nuclear weapons-free world to drivers and passengers in backed-up traffic entering the Trigger Ave. entrance to the Bangor submarine base. Signs with quotations by Dr. King stated, "We Still Have a Choice Today: Nonviolent Coexistence or Violent Annihilation" and "When scientific power outruns spiritual power, we end up with guided missiles and misguided men." Other signs had

images and statements about Dr. King, and many other signs stated, "Abolish Nuclear Weapons."

Demonstrators were in high spirits in spite of the cold weather, lining both sides of the roadway just outside the entrance gate. The demonstration lasted about an hour.

Robin Phare, of the Resist US-Led War Movement spoke in front of the Trident submarine base and stated:

*How do we choose to remember Martin Luther King Jr?*

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**Ground Zero honors MLK....continued on page 2**

*Is it as a beloved civil rights leader, a champion of non-violence, an inspirational speaker? The textbooks, the monuments, the politicians give us an incomplete image. They have twisted and contorted his legacy to serve the interests of the powerful.*

*Now more than ever, it is important to remember the MLK that was widely hated, the MLK that was arrested, the MLK that was assassinated. Despised, jailed, and murdered for posing a threat to US interests. He understood the necessity of an anti-war movement that tackled the root issue of US imperialism. An anti-war movement connected to the problems of the working class. And for that, he was killed.*

*The legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. is not only the possibilities he envisioned, but importantly, the repression he faced in the struggle for those possibilities...*

Sue Ablao and Glen Milner, of Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, read a statement written by beloved Jackie Hudson in 2005 while she was in federal prison in Victorville, California. Jackie's 2005 statement of Dr. King is as true today. Jackie's message spoke of the importance of learning from our opponents, and in part, stated:

*Our role of nonviolent peacemakers calling our government to accountability must increase in these days—days that Martin would have been hard pressed to predict or imagine.*

*My deep gratitude for your presence here today. I join you in spirit at these gates which protect the most dangerous and devastating threat to a peaceful planet—Bangor—Home of Trident.*

*Peace be with each and every one as you Witness, Act and Support today...*

Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor, just 20 miles from Seattle, is homeport to the largest concentration of deployed nuclear warheads in the world. The nuclear warheads are deployed on Trident D-5 missiles on SSBN submarines and are stored in an underground nuclear weapons storage facility on the base.

There are eight Trident SSBN submarines deployed at Bangor. Six Trident SSBN submarines are deployed on the East Coast at Kings Bay, Georgia.

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**Glen Milner** serves on the Communications Committee for Ground Zero, and leads legal efforts on behalf of the group. He took the photo on the cover.

## ***Join Ground Zero for Mother's Day Weekend of Action, May 11-12***

Please join Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action for our annual weekend honoring the original intention of a Mother's Day for Peace. On Saturday and Sunday, May 11th and 12th people will come together to learn, plant, and act together to resist war, violence, and nuclear weapons. We will invoke the original spirit of Mother's Day as a time to demand disarmament, "to bewail and commemorate" war dead, and to "solemnly take counsel" with each other on ending war and achieving peace.

There will be speakers and activities both days, as well as a nonviolent vigil/action at the nearby Bangor Trident nuclear submarine base, which represents the largest operational deployed concentration of nuclear weapons in the world.

Guest speakers will include Naiome Krienke, founder of The Longhouse Project, and Ward Wilson, author of the recently published and widely acclaimed book, *It Is Possible: A Future Without Nuclear Weapons*.

More information and the full schedule will be posted on the Ground Zero Events Page in the coming weeks. Children are welcome! We welcome volunteers to assist in the planning and also to help on the two days of the event. Please contact [railsback.kathryn@gmail.com](mailto:railsback.kathryn@gmail.com), [smakar-in@mailbox.org](mailto:smakar-in@mailbox.org), or [ltullai@gmail.com](mailto:ltullai@gmail.com) if you would like to help or for more information. Also, please contact one of us if you would like to camp at Ground Zero or have questions about transportation. We look forward to seeing you in May!



**Participants at the 2023 Mother's Day action** enjoyed a beautiful spring day. *Photo by Glen Milner.*

# Pacific Northwest Peace Pagoda Update

By Rev. Senji Kanaeda

In February 2024, we started building the niche in front of the pagoda that houses the Buddha statue. It is the figure of the Buddha who first preaches after attaining enlightenment. When visitors come in from Clear Creek road to Ground Zero Center, it faces southeast so that it heads straight to the front and is at its sunniest.

The conductor of all the construction is Jim Lyman, a local builder who met Fujii Guruji, the founder monk of Nipponzan 44 years ago. Jim has been associated with the Nipponzan Myohoji Temple on Bainbridge Island, and is working with his childhood friend Dale, an excellent mason, and carpenter Allen from Bainbridge Island.

The next step is the pouring of concrete on the first platform (cloister), which is five and a half feet wide and when it is finished, the dome is concreted. In early summer, at dawn, you can almost see the frame of the pagoda. After that, we will add three layers surrounding the hemisphere, cap heito (flat box head) on it and the sorin will be stood at the center of heito.

The design of sorin was originated from the Kofuku-ji temple's five stories pagoda, one of the oldest temples in Nara, Japan established in the 7th century. That decoration was originally the protected umbrella for Buddha's body and spirit and spreading the idea of Ahimsa, nonviolence. I visited Japan this new year time for it. The sorin will be made in Kobe, a sister city of Seattle and I hope it will be shipped from Kobe to Ground Zero through Seattle or Tacoma harbor in the coming October. We put the lightning rod together.

The Buddha statue will be carved by the Massachusetts sculptor Tom Matsuda, and the kohai, which is the flower petal behind it, is being made by Eguchi in Tokyo, and the foundation and three reliefs are being created by local Quaker artist Craig Jacobson.

This dream come true project was originated by American grassroots citizen's spirits and the spiritual leadership of one 96 years old Buddhist monk from Japan in 1980, 44 years ago. The second building per-

mit was obtained on May 17, 2019. The ground purification ceremony was held on August 24, and then the Covid 19 epidemic started 4 months later.

However, the Ground Zero Center, which has agreed to build the pagoda on its land, has helped facilitate the construction of the Pagoda. Thanks to the service and dedication of many local people who have come to help with construction. It is literally a bodhisattva practice, and it continues to this day. In other words, I believe that all of the people involved in the construction in various ways have done things that eventually become Buddhas (precious one as human) and apostles of peace.

Financially, it was based on donations by monks and lay people in Japan and ordinary good citizens and friends in the United States. That's exactly what it is; literally "Jozai" – the budget from the pure hearts.

The pagoda is a large semicircular mound that enshrines the remains of the Buddha. The supreme wisdom for this earth and for all living beings is non-killing and nonviolence. I believe that the thoughts and hopes of the Buddha welled up on the earth and are crystallized in this form. That is also embodiment of the Lotus Sutra Chapter 16 which emphasizes the Buddha's nature belongs to all includ-

ing animals and fruits.

The Buddha-nature preached in Chapter 16 is not limited to the life of the Buddha as a historical human but is the eternal life that exists and flows in all universes beyond time and space. It must be the "goodness" that should be found at the root of all lives. Recently, I personally thought that the pagoda is the exact embodiment of the concept of the Lotus Sutra Chapter 16, the core of it as king or queen of all Buddhist texts.

*Editor's Note: [Click here](#) to learn more about the Pacific Northwest Peace Pagoda and see progress photos. [Click here](#) to learn more about the Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist Temple on Bainbridge Island.*

*Rev. Senji Kanaeda has led peace walks around the world, and serves on the Ground Zero Stewardship Council.*



**Rev. Kanaeda** stands next to an example of a sorin, the filial that will grace the top of the Peace Pagoda. *Photo by Shōji Tomiyama.*

# Abolishing Nuclear Weapons: No Utopian Dream

By Leonard Eiger and Glen Milner

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) went into effect three years ago (on January 22, 2021) making nuclear weapons illegal under international law for the first time in history.

The TPNW is the first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons, with the goal of leading towards their total elimination. It specifically prohibits countries from producing, testing, acquiring, possessing or stockpiling nuclear weapons. It also outlaws the transfer of the weapons and forbids signatories from allowing any nuclear explosive device to be stationed, installed or deployed in their territory.

On July 7, 2017, a majority of countries (122) voted to pass the TPNW. Since then 97 countries have signed the treaty, and 70 have ratified, becoming states parties and therefore bound by its rules. Conspicuously missing are the nine nuclear-armed countries!

On that same day France, the United Kingdom and the United States issued a joint statement clearly stating that they “do not intend to sign, ratify or ever become party to” the treaty that was passed by a majority of countries that same day. It is unconscionable that any country claiming to uphold the intention and rule of international law and the United Nations Charter would refuse to support one of the most important treaties in modern history.

Of course flaunting international law is business as usual for the nuclear-armed countries. The U.S. - which is the only nation to have used nuclear weapons against another - has blatantly disregarded international law on countless occasions, most recently in its unfettered support for Israel in its illegal and genocidal campaign against the Palestinian people.

On January 22, 2024, the anniversary of the TPNW's entry into force, people across the U.S. and around the world stood up in unified voice to raise awareness of the importance of the treaty at a time when the danger of nuclear war is higher than it has been for generations.

Here, in Seattle, Washington, activists stood with multiple banners on the N 92nd St. I-5 overpass facing incoming traffic to Seattle on the Interstate 5 freeway, and reaching thousands of drivers. The banners made people aware that nuclear weapons are illegal, and one of the banners called on people to renounce militarism.

On January 7th, the Kitsap Sun newspaper published [An Appeal to Navy Personnel](#), paid for by Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, and calling on our brothers and sisters in the Navy to “Refuse to engage in nuclear annihilation!” The appeal is a sincere plea for the people who are responsible for launching nuclear weapons to consider the consequences of their actions along with their moral and legal responsibilities.

On January 13th, members of the Resist US-Led War Movement and Ground Zero joined together for a demon-

stration against nuclear weapons at the Bangor nuclear submarine base in Silverdale, Washington. The thermo-nuclear warheads (carried on Trident II D5 ballistic missiles) deployed on submarines based at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor comprise the largest concentration of deployed nuclear weapons in the world.

History has shown time and time again that the possession of nuclear weapons has failed to “deter” aggression by “potential adversaries.” It is a dangerous illusion to believe the Pentagon's official position that [“Nuclear deterrence is the bedrock of U.S. national security.”](#)

From the Cuban Missile Crisis to Russia's war on Ukraine, [deterrence continues to fail](#), and only cooler heads have prevented the unthinkable to occur, which would mean the deaths of millions of people, the end of civilization as we know it, and perhaps even the end of (at least human) life on Earth.

Furthermore, the nine nuclear-armed countries continue to push back against the wishes of the vast majority of countries that are calling for disarmament, calling it an unrealistic, utopian vision that can never be achieved. As Ray Acheson, Director of [Reaching Critical Will](#), states, “Disarmament comes to be construed as a utopian vision of a world that cannot exist because, as the argument goes, some people will always want to retain or develop the capacity to wield massive, unfathomable levels of violence over others” (from [Banning the Bomb: Smashing the Patriarchy](#), Page 31).

This global order, controlled by the nuclear-armed countries, that allows certain “rational actors” to possess nuclear weapons, “is guided above all else by ‘deeply and profoundly internalized prejudices about the global distribution of reason and trust’” ([Banning the Bomb](#), Page 40). The nuclear-armed countries would have us believe that we can trust no one, putting to rest any discussion of “mutual interdependence and cooperation” (and ultimately disarmament).

Ironically, the goals of the TPNW really are possible. Nuclear weapons have always been exorbitantly expensive, and the financial costs and risks are becoming greater and greater, particularly in a new and growing arms race. Even more importantly, they are useless as weapons of war; they are omniscidal. Once used in warfare, humanity can never go back to business as usual, assuming there will be anything left. This is what is so compelling about the TPNW. With the implementation of international treaties and especially a significant treaty like the TPNW, with a means to verify compliance, countries can begin to develop trust for a new international order.

We will need to develop a new level of trust (in one another) in order to collectively address this and other existential issues like climate change and pandemics.

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**No Utopian Dream... continued on page 5**

Moving forward with the TPNW, and bringing the nuclear armed countries on board, will serve to eliminate the threat of nuclear weapons while building a sense of trust between countries—which is desperately needed to solve other serious problems. And the cuts in nuclear weapons expenditures can be used on the other pressing issues.

It is time for countries and civil society to rise up to help the United Nations fulfill its original intention (as stated in the preamble to the [United Nations Charter](#):

*to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and*

*to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and*

*to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and*

*to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,*

**AND FOR THESE ENDS**

*to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors, and*

*to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and*

*to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall*

*not be used, save in the common interest, and*

*to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement*

*of all peoples.*

The nuclear-armed countries collectively possess roughly [12,500 nuclear weapons](#), more than enough to extinguish life on Earth. Rather than wasting our collective human and economic resources on our own demise, shouldn't we be coming together to solve the problems we have created and build a just, sustainable world for the sake of future generations?

Why would a nuclear-armed country sign on to the TPNW? For self-preservation, knowing that threats involving the use of nuclear weapons cannot go on indefinitely until these horrific weapons are used. Nuclear-armed countries know that they will be decimated in a nuclear exchange. And these same countries are expending enormous amounts of resources (technology and funds) only to ensure their (and our) own death sentence.

In his remarks to the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 2022, UN Secretary General António Guterres spoke to the urgency of nuclear disarmament:

“The clouds that parted following the end of the Cold War are gathering once more. We have been extraordi-

narily lucky so far. But luck is not a strategy. Nor is it a shield from geopolitical tensions boiling over into nuclear conflict. Today, humanity is just one misunderstanding, one miscalculation away from nuclear annihilation. We need the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as much as ever.”



**“Wasting our collective human and economic resources on our own demise.”** If we can risk nuclear war, we can risk disarmament. *Photo courtesy of Shutterstock.*

Secretary General Guterres finished his remarks by saying:

“Future generations are counting on your commitment to step back from the abyss. We have a shared obligation to leave the world a better, safer place than we found it. This is our moment to meet this basic test, and lift the cloud of nuclear annihilation, once and for all.”

On January 24th the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists announced that the Doomsday Clock would remain at “90 seconds to midnight, still the closest the Clock has ever been to midnight, reflecting the continued state of unprecedented danger the world faces.” Arguably, the Clock could have been set even closer to midnight, indicating the ever-worsening situation faced by humanity, first and foremost the continued threat of use of nuclear weapons. The clock is ticking as we continue to move toward the abyss!

We, as global citizens must demand that our leaders take action to step back from the abyss, embrace that shared obligation, work to build mutual understanding and trust, and remove the threat of nuclear annihilation once and for all. Future generations will either thank us, or those who might survive the initial effects of an inevitable and horrific nuclear war will curse us for our folly.

This is no pipe dream, no utopian vision, no naive proposal. It is quite simply a matter of life or death – the end of life as we know it.

What will we choose?

**Leonard Eiger** is a member of the Communication and Media Committee, and sends out press releases and information on behalf of Ground Zero.

**Glen Milner** leads legal struggles on behalf of Ground Zero. He lives in Lake Forest Park.

# Protect Press Freedoms: *Free Julian Assange*

By Leonard Eiger

Recently in London, lawyers for imprisoned WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange asked the British High Court of Justice to grant him a new appeal, which would likely be his last chance to avoid extradition to the United States, where he faces a 175-year prison sentence (and a possible death sentence) for publishing classified documents that exposed U.S. war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan. The court could render its decision any day.

The Guardian put the case in perspective: “Which is the more serious criminal activity: extrajudicial killings, routine torture of prisoners and illegal renditions carried out by a state, or exposing those actions by publishing illegally leaked details of how, where, when and by whom they were committed?” The question is, by who’s laws is such a courageous action deemed “illegal?”

We should all be asking, what is the criminal activity: extrajudicial killings, torture of prisoners and illegal renditions, all carried out by the U.S., or exposing those horrific actions by publishing details of the crimes?

Assange’s lawyer, Jennifer Robinson, said that his extradition would set a dangerous precedent for press freedom. “If Julian is extradited and goes on trial [in the US] under the Espionage Act, this is a case which is going to set precedent which criminalizes journalistic activity and will be used against the rest of the media.”

The US government charged Assange with multiple violations under the [Espionage Act of 1917](#), an archaic law that has been misused by the US since its enactment. If convicted, Assange faces up to 175 years in jail in what would be the first prosecution of a publisher under the U.S. Espionage Act. In a healthy democracy, journalists can reveal war crimes and cases of torture and abuse without being punished. If our government can use espionage laws against journalists and publishers, they are deprived of their most important and traditional defense – of acting in the interest of the public’s right to know.

Speaking for the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) in 2019, CPJ North America Program Coordinator Alexandra Ellerbeck said, “It is a reckless assault on the First Amendment that crosses a line... and threatens to criminalize the most basic practices of reporting.”

In the US constitutional democracy, We The People have the need and the right to know what our government is doing in our name. When such information is withheld and kept secret we cannot fully take part in the democrat-

ic process, and therefore do not have a properly functioning democracy.

The erosion of democracy and First Amendment press freedoms hinder the dissemination of truth and allows the responsible parties to skirt responsibility and repercussions for their criminal actions. To date there have been no prosecutions resulting from the evidence published by Wikileaks showing war crimes being committed by, and on behalf of, the US Government.

Freedom of the press and the public’s right to know is recognized in both the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. These cherished freedoms are in danger, and need protection.

Julian Assange’s so-called crime was to publish records of war crimes leaked to him from whistleblowers who shone a spotlight on US operations and the realities of the endless “War on Terror.” The most infamous of these was the “Collateral Murder” video footage of US helicopter attacks in Baghdad that killed 11 civilians including two Reuters journalists. Chelsea Manning disclosed the “collateral murder” footage to Wikileaks along with nearly 750,000 classified, or unclassified but sensitive,

military and diplomatic documents, and was court-martialed in July 2013 for violations of the Espionage Act and other offenses.

Assange said in a [December 20, 2012 statement](#), “The power of people speaking up and resisting together terrifies corrupt and undemocratic power. So much so that ordinary people here in the West are now the enemy of governments, an enemy to be watched, an enemy to be controlled and to be impoverished.”

On February 14, 2024 Australia’s parliament voted to approve a historic resolution calling on the US and UK to release Assange and allow him to return home to Australia. As Australian member of Parliament, MP Andrew Wilkie said of the resolution, “...it is the will of the Australian government, the Australian Parliament and the Australian people that Julian Assange be brought home.”

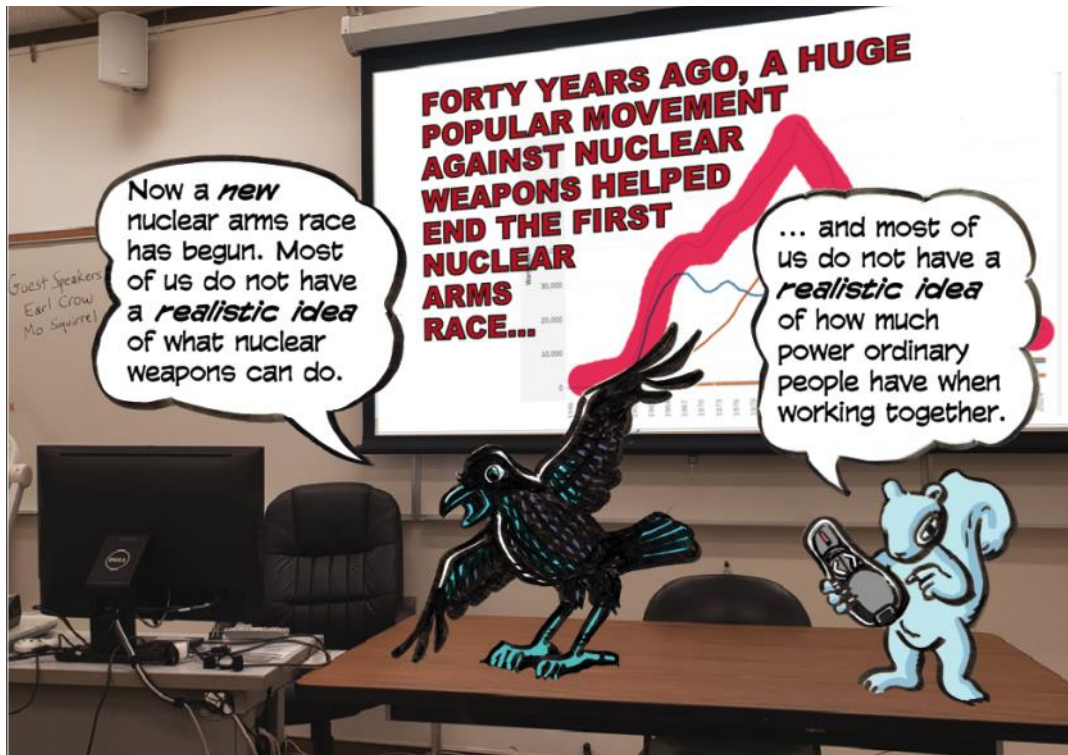
The British High Court of Justice should go beyond granting Assange an appeal, and order his release from prison. The UK government should also facilitate his safe return to Australia at the earliest possible date.



**Large protests in London** have called for the UK to resist the US’s pressure to expedite Assange. *Photo courtesy of Huffingtonpost.com.*

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**Julian Assange... continued on page 7**



## Ground Zero Comics Update

We must report that there is a delay in the Ground Zero comic book. The final release is delayed until later this summer to allow the wholesale distribution of our *Ground Zero Comics* to comic book shops before we begin selling them ourselves.

If you have preordered or contacted us about your comic book[s], we will let you know when they are available. Please send inquiries about the comic book to [gzcomics@gzcenter.org](mailto:gzcomics@gzcenter.org).

Above is the top half of the back cover of the comic book where Earl Crow and Mo Squirrel make a plea to read *Ground Zero Comics*. Drawing by Leonard Rifas.

Please check back at [www.gzcenter.org](http://www.gzcenter.org) or [gzcomics@gzcenter.org](mailto:gzcomics@gzcenter.org) later this summer for sales.

### Julian Assange... continued from page 6

The Biden Administration, specifically Attorney General Merrick Garland and the US Department of Justice, should drop all charges against Assange that relate to his publishing activities in his work with Wikileaks. The US Congress should pass House Resolution 934, "Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that regular journalistic activities are protected under the First Amendment, and that the United States ought to drop all charges against and attempts to extradite Julian Assange."

The Walkley Foundation in Australia issued a statement that said, "...by designing and constructing a means to encourage whistleblowers, WikiLeaks and its editor-in-chief Julian Assange took a brave, determined, and independent stand for freedom of speech and transparency that has empowered people all over the world. And in the process, they have triggered a robust debate inside and outside the media about official secrecy, the public's right to know and the future of journalism."

Assange's extradition would send a chilling message to journalists and others gathering evidence to investigate war crimes, ultimately threatening initiatives seeking justice for civilians caught up in wars and violent conflicts. Freedom of speech and journalistic freedom are at risk in far too many countries. The most egregious current example is the ongoing (and at least some explicitly targeted) killings of journalists in Gaza by the Israel Defense Forces. Journalism is not a crime!

All people who cherish freedom of expression should stand with Julian Assange and demand his immediate release and safe return to Australia. We must support all journalists who speak truth to power, and support their sources - including whistleblowers - who risk everything to make this possible.

**Leonard Eiger** is a longtime member of Ground Zero. He writes and edits the blog *the Subversive Peacemaker* at <https://subversivepeacemaking.blogspot.com>.

# GROUND ZERO

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*“Israel’s genocide on the  
Palestinians in Gaza is an  
escalatory stage of a long-  
standing settler colonial process  
of erasure.”*

— *United Nations report of the  
Special Rapporteur*

## mothers of Gaza

By Larry Kerschner

the United Nations Population Fund estimated there were approximately 50,000 pregnant women in Gaza when Israel declared its war during October

only 15 out of Gaza’s 36 hospitals are functioning in those fifteen only partial patient care is offered most pregnant women in Gaza are malnourished

hospitals are unable to provide any anesthetics during childbirth and other painful treatments like the amputation of limbs of injured children

how far can a mother see through the salty tears when calendars and mirrors have no meaning when death completely fills the darkness



*Larry Kerschner is a member of Veterans for Peace Rachel Corrie Chapter 109. The photo above is courtesy of [www.aa.com](http://www.aa.com).*