



# PEACEWORKER JOURNAL LETTER

MAY 2016



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Dear Friends

I cannot believe that I'm almost two thirds of the way through my placement at Omega Research Foundation. The last four months have been so full and exciting, they seem to have swept me up in a whirlwind. Omega monitors the manufacture, trade and transfer of military, security and policing (MSP) equipment and makes recommendations for the appropriate use and regulation of this equipment. They also monitor international use of force and how MSP equipment is used by law enforcement officials across the globe to violate and repress human rights.

Overall, my role is to explore new digital tools and technologies which can enhance and diversify Omega's research and publications. One aspect of this has been to trial new data collection methods and in recent months I have been using 'data scraping' software to collate and organise ten years' worth of exhibitor lists from arms fairs across the globe. Once complete, this extensive database will be used by Omega to trace the movement and expansion of different manufacturers and suppliers of MSP equipment and identify international trends.



Whilst Omega's publications are fundamental at the policy level and have had a significant influence on European regulations, their detailed and technical nature means they are less likely to be viewed by a broader audience. Another aspect of my role has been to create more visual, interactive and "journalistic" outputs which aim to engage other NGOs, activists and the wider international community about MSP equipment and the human rights context of its use. In the past four months, I have put together an interactive map of arms fairs from around the world, a visual timeline about the human rights crisis in Burundi and a pictorial social media piece in response to the transfer of new military vehicles to Uganda. I was delighted to hear that War Resisters International and Campaign Against Arms Trade have been using the arms fair map to identify fairs that have no campaign presence, and address this. I hope that these digital outputs will continue to go some way to capturing people's attention and mobilising action.

As well as research and report writing, Omega also delivers training about MSP equipment to other human rights groups and law enforcement officials. I was extremely fortunate to be given the opportunity to support one of these trainings at a Palestinian University in the West Bank. The training was attended by Palestinian human rights organisations and aimed to support their advocacy work by exploring ways they could better capture and share their data. In my workshop, I introduced a pocketbook resource for identifying and photographing MSP equipment, and a camera app which assists with capturing credible photos of human rights abuses. I also showed them online tools which will assist them in collaborating with other human rights organisations and sharing their narrative more widely, in order to have a stronger impact at the international level.

The whole experience of being in Palestine was unforgettable. From the harrowing stories local researchers shared with me to the day-to-day injustices I witnessed first-hand, I learnt a great deal about life under occupation. I left the country deeply moved, with a determination to



return and contribute to the peace movement in whatever small but heartfelt way I can. This life-changing opportunity was only possible because of the Peaceworker scheme.

During my Peaceworker year so far, there have been endless opportunities for learning. I have developed technical skills and knowledge that I couldn't have gained anywhere else in such a short space of time. I have networked with amazing peace and human rights organisations and I've had a caring Quaker support network there at all times to help me to step back, reflect in quietude and learn about myself in the process. The Quaker element of the Peaceworker scheme is invaluable. There's been times when I've felt overwhelmed and despaired that my work is insignificant against the tide of conflict in the world. In hearing about the amazing work of my fellow Peaceworkers, QPSW and the programme assistants at QUNO, I remember that I'm part of a movement that is bigger than the sum of its parts. Thank you so much to QPSW and Omega for a fascinating few months. I still cannot believe how fortunate I am to be here and look forward to the final part of the year.

In Friendship

Zara