

ROOTS OF RESISTANCE

Quakers against the arms trade

Every two years, thousands of arms dealers gather in East London to sell weapons to militaries from all over the world. Roots of Resistance is a community of Friends preparing to take creative, vibrant, nonviolent action to resist the Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) arms fair. This briefing explains what DSEI is, and the action we will take together on **Tuesday 3rd September**. It also includes an action consensus, which we hope everyone taking action with us will follow.

What is DSEI?

Defence and Security Exhibition International (DSEI) is a trade show event for the arms industry. The four day event provides an opportunity for more than 1,500 companies to display their products and services to 30,000 visitors from around the world, many from military delegations, police and security departments, and private security companies. Several countries pay for a "national pavilion", which features their national companies.

DSEI takes place every two years at the ExCeL Centre, a massive exhibition centre in East London. The ExCeL sits alongside Victoria Dock, on the Thames, near London City Airport.

How is DSEI organised?

DSEI is organised by a private company called Clarion Events, with the full support of the government's Defence and Security Organisation (DSO). The DSO employs around 130 civil servants, and exists to help the arms and security

industries sell their products around the world. The DSO's Export Support Team is staffed by regular officers and soldiers and is a unique and intrinsic part of DSO. This military team:

- provides impartial military advice
- assists with promotional material
- gives demonstrations
- hosts visits of foreign delegations
- provides after sales training and support.

Clarion also organises other arms fairs around the world, including EDEX (Egypt) "The Counter Terror Expo" (UAE), Border Security Expo (USA), ITEC (Sweden), and a range of others.

Who attends DSEI?

There is very little information available on who attends DSEI, but the government publishes the list of countries they have invited. In 2017, 56 countries received official invitations, of which 47 attended, including Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, Egypt, France, India, Italy, Malaysia, Peru, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the USA. Nine of the countries invited were authoritarian regimes, six were identified by the UK government as 'human rights priority countries', and five were at war.

The event is also attended by large numbers of British politicians. In 2017, a dozen ministers including several Defence Ministers and the Secretary of State for International Trade attended, as well as backbench MPs from the Conservative and Labour parties, often visiting stands organised by companies in their own constituencies. In the past, MPs such as Caroline Lucas have been able to enter the fair and expose illegal equipment being marketed.

What happens at DSEI?

DSEI is a trade show, which means lots of companies have stands where they display their equipment, and they take



An armoured vehicle on display at DSEI 2017

Website: www.rootsofresistance.org.uk **E-mail:** hello@rootsofresistance.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/QuakersRoR **Twitter:** [@quaker_ror](https://twitter.com/quaker_ror)

the opportunity to speak to potential buyers. Deals themselves are most likely to be finalised at other points and through other channels, but arms fairs like DSEI are an essential cog in the machine, providing the opportunity for dealers, buyers, and brokers to meet, test equipment, and socialise.

A huge array of different companies attend DSEI, marketing the weapons and paraphernalia of war including:

- tanks, trucks, helicopters, fighter planes, drones
- missiles, ammunition, rifles, handguns, and other weapons
- helmets, clothing
- Command and control, communication, and intelligence equipment

Some of the world's biggest arms companies exhibit at DSEI, including Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, BAE Systems, Boeing, General Dynamics, Northrop Grumman, Thales, and L3 Technologies. These companies sell a huge array of different weapons systems. Many other companies present at DSEI are more specialised, marketing a range of specific pieces of equipment. For example Aimpoint, a Swedish company, primarily sell and market targeting sights for military, law enforcement, and civilian guns. Hi-tech equipment - such as surveillance equipment, data management, digital security, biometrics (fingerprint, iris recognition, etc), and simulation equipment - is very prominent.

The equipment and services marketed at DSEI goes/extends beyond "traditional" warfare; another important and specific area relates to militarised policing. Several companies sell a range of weaponry and equipment related to crowd control, responding to "riots" and protests, including equipment such as:

- Tear gas, pepper spray, and other chemical weapons - and the necessary launchers
- Body armour, helmets, and other protective gear
- Vehicles
- Handcuffs and other restraints
- Monitoring and surveillance equipment

Equipment sold by companies present at DSEI have been used heavily by authoritarian regimes across the world, from Bahrain to Venezuela. It is often marketed as "non lethal" or "less lethal", ignoring the fact that such weapons can and do kill and seriously injure, and that they are often used to quell legitimate dissent and protest. Prominent companies present at DSEI selling this type of equipment include Chemring, Imperial Armour, and NonLethal Technologies.



A South African arms company display weapons at DSEI 2009



Navy officers from the UK and India greet each other at DSEI 2017

Some companies don't sell equipment - they offer services, training, computer programs, or other logistical support that militaries around the world use. This can include everything from firing ranges to logistical support, like transporting equipment or personnel.

A series of seminars and workshops run alongside the trade show. In 2017, these covered subjects like "cyber risk resilience", "the surface force structure of the US Navy", "Australian army modernisation", "next generation airforce" and "land warfare challenges". These workshops are led by serving military personnel from around the world, think tanks, and industry representatives.

History of illegality

Over the years, there have been several occasions where it has been demonstrated that companies at DSEI have been breaking the law.

In 2011, Amnesty International obtained brochures marketing banned shackles - such as leg irons and waist chains - to people attending DSEI. Overall, Amnesty International have identified nine companies that violated UK law at DSEI events between 2005 and 2013.

In 2013, two companies - MagForce International and Tian Jin MyWay International Trading - were found to be marketing leg irons and electric batons, often used in acts of torture. The companies were only removed when Caroline Lucas MP raised the issue in parliament.

The British arms trade

DSEI doesn't take place in a vacuum - a key reason it takes place at all is to promote the British arms trade. In 2016, the Independent revealed statistics that show Britain is the world's second biggest arms exporter, selling more weapons on average than France, Russia, or China over the previous decade, with only the USA selling more. British company BAE Systems is the world's third biggest arms company, employing 82,500 people and with nearly £1.5bn in profits in 2015.

In December 2018 Campaign Against Arms Trade research showed that between 2008 and 2017, £39 billion worth of arms were approved for export, of which £12bn - nearly a third - went to states on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office human rights "priorities country" list. In 2017, 5,782 export licences, worth £1.5bn for military items in countries of concern were approved, £1.1bn of which were sold to Saudi Arabia, and £221m were sold to Israel.

Action briefing

Roots of Resistance will take action alongside other faith groups on Tuesday 3rd September, at the Excel Centre, in London. There are three key elements to our action: meeting for worship, a collective Quaker "craftivist" tapestry, and protest singing.

"Refusal to fight with weapons is not surrender. We are not passive when threatened by the greedy, the cruel, the tyrant, the unjust. We will struggle to remove the causes of impasse and confrontation by every means of nonviolent resistance available."

Quaker Faith and Practise, 24:10

Hearts and minds prepared

We will gather for a briefing session on Monday 2nd September, in The Light at Friends House, in Euston, from 1:30pm for action preparation (making banners, etc), and from 5:30 for a full briefing, legal information and meeting for worship, to make sure our hearts and minds are prepared, finishing at 8:30. We would encourage everyone to arrive in London in time to attend as much of the the briefing as possible.

We also intend to organise preparation meetings and trainings around the country for Friends planning on joining us to take action against the fair. If you would like to help us organise a training in your area, please email hello@rootsofresistance.org.uk.

For several years, the focus of protest against DSEI has been to target the setup of the fair, in the week preceding the event, and we will continue this strategy this year. DSEI takes place from 9-13th September, and during the week before the event trucks laden with military equipment - as well as all of the other equipment and consumables needed for an event attracting 30,000 visitors - will be entering the ExCeL exhibition centre. Protesting the setup is a much easier point to resist, has a bigger impact on the organisation and preparation of the event, and gives a longer time to build interest and pressure in the media and with politicians.

1. Meeting for worship

Our resistance to DSEI will be rooted in our Quaker faith. Throughout the day, we will organise opportunities to gather in worshipful silence, close to the ExCeL Centre. Over the coming months Roots of Resistance will be organising and preparing Quakers across the country to take collective, worshipful action.

Our meetings outside DSEI will be a little different from what occurs in meeting houses on a Sunday morning - they will be outdoors, and open to the elements! But they will also be an opportunity for individuals and groups to take nonviolent direct action, and for others to witness, uphold, and support such action. Roots of Resistance will support and enable



Quakers hold a Meeting for Worship at DSEI 2017

those willing and able to take such action.

We will organise legal support, media and social media cover, people supporting the wellbeing of everyone involved, and various other arrangements to enable everyone to take action in a manner that is safe, effective, and rooted in our Quaker values. If you have particular skills in any of these areas (or would like to learn!) then please email hello@rootsofresistance.org.uk.

The whole day is being organised by a coalition of other faith groups, and our meetings will take place in and amongst prayers and acts of worship led by other faith groups. Roots of Resistance are working with other faith groups to organise a number of interfaith elements, such as collective prayer/worship, or a shared meal. Again, the details of these will be announced closer to the time.

2. Quaker tapestry

As well as directly resisting the fair, we will also engage in a collective Quaker "craftivist" project - and what's more Quaker than a tapestry?! Over the coming months, we would like to invite you to produce a mini-banner. Using cross-stitch, appliqué, fabric pens, or any other method, we would like you to illustrate the impact of the arms trade and our resistance to it on a small piece of fabric. We will bring our mini-banners together at DSEI to form a big tapestry, and after our action we'll use them around London to highlight DSEI and the impact of the international arms trade.

When thinking about your piece of the tapestry, you might want to illustrate:

- the impact of the international arms trade in wars and conflict around the world,
- the arms trade at work - the meetings, the deals, the exhibitions...
- our movements resistance to the arms trade,
- or your vision of a peaceful world, free of the arms trade.

You might want to work with others in your meeting to produce a piece, or a number of pieces. Contributing to our collective artwork provides an opportunity for members of meetings unable to travel to London to engage and contribute to our action.

Each mini-banner should be around 15x20cm in size, and ideally backed onto another piece of fabric strong enough for eyelets (so we can attach pieces to lampposts, railings, etc). You can use a combination of words or images, whatever feels appropriate. Please bring your mini-banner to the briefing session on Monday 2nd, or along to the action.

This idea comes from the Craftivist Collective and has been used in other campaigns. For more information and ideas see www.craftivist-collective.com

3. Protest singing

It's difficult to imagine a peace action without song! In the months building up to the action we will gather songs of peace, justice, love, and equality, produce a song book we can use on the day, and share online videos on our social media, so we can be learning some of the tunes beforehand.

Action consensus

Roots of Resistance is a community of Friends preparing to take creative, vibrant, nonviolent action to resist the Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) arms fair. This action consensus outlines how we hope to take action together.

We understand that throughout our action we will encounter many different people, including staff from the ExCeL centre, police officers, security guards, truck drivers, members of the public. We will recognise the humanity of all those we encounter, approaching them with dignity and respect.

We will direct our protest at the government, the Excel Centre, Clarion Events, and the many companies present at DSEI.

Everyone is welcome to take action with us, regardless of whether they have any previous experience of nonviolent protest.

Safety is important, and we will act in a way that minimises the risk of harm to ourselves and others. If roads are blocked, we will ask drivers to turn off their engines.

Those under the influence of alcohol or drugs will not be welcome to take action with us.

We won't carry weapons, or anything that could be misconstrued as a weapon.

We will behave in a cool, calm, and measured way. If conflict arises, we will seek to de-escalate the conflict. We will remain nonviolent at all times.

If our protest is taking place in the road, we will move to allow emergency vehicles (but not police) to pass.

Regarding police officers present on the day, we will remain aware:

- that different people have different experiences of the police,
- that the police react differently depending on an individual's race, sex, gender, class, age, or other aspects of their identity,
- the police collect, store, and process information on our movements,
- that police forces from across the world will be attending DSEI.

We hope to act in solidarity with all those who have experienced violence from the police, or are likely to in the future. This means we will not share information about other individuals or groups with the police. We will also avoid extended conversations, we will make sure we know and assert our own and others rights, and we will question individual officers and the wider police operation surrounding our action.



Website: www.rootsofresistance.org.uk **E-mail:** hello@rootsofresistance.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/QuakersRoR **Twitter:** [@quaker_ror](https://twitter.com/quaker_ror)