



American Friends Service Committee

Voices for Peace 2025: Webinar Report

Hosts:

Kerri Kennedy, Associate General Secretary for International Programs

Federiga Bindi: European Union liaison and European Scholar

Voices for Peace 2025 **is the first part** of a four-part dialogue series discussing the increasingly volatile global context, and how we can change course before it is too late. The first virtual dialogue session was a convening of insightful thinkers and activists to discuss this global crisis.

Introduction by Joyce Ajlouny: General Secretary of the American Friends Service Committee

Four speakers were brought together to speak about democracy, human rights and development, and the impacts of the US and European Union policies. This is a context setting dialogue, and then over the course of the next months, we're bringing local civil society leaders, global civil society leaders to meet in person in Cape Town and in Nairobi to consider the impacts of the global harms from the policies that have been enacted and to envision a new way forward. This dialogue series seeks to bring a wide range of actors together to share, strategize, and listen.

Questions to explore over the next few months:

- How have the decisions and policy changes that are made in the United States and in Europe impacting the rest of the globe?
- As we see a shift towards authoritarian, a decrease in development funding and an increase in militarization, what can emerge from the darkness?
- Who do we build our collective strength and take action together?

Key Takeaways from Speakers

Uzra Zeya: *President and CEO, Human Rights First; Former Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights*

Democracy is not dead- we cannot be fear based and must stay engaged.

Zeya outlined some key paradigm shifts that have occurred and what this means for how we as humanitarian workers move forward. She stressed the need to reject fear, apathy, and defeatism, and we have to assert ownership of our own democracies. We are seeing a continued and increase of weaponization of immigrants in the US and Europe – and an administration perpetrating escalating enforced disappearances inside and outside the US. “The end result is Americans are less safe, less prosperous and less respected around the world to the detriment of international peace and security”

Prof. Jeffrey Sachs- *University Professor and Director of the Center for Sustainable Development, Columbia University; President, UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN); and SDG Advocate for Secretary-General Guterres*

We cannot bludgeon our way to peace. We need democracy, open diplomacy, and engagement.

Sachs outlined the certain threats to American democracy comes in two directions; the crackdown at home we are seeing and the threat of the American military complex spreading its military power- at the detriment to both global citizens and Americans at home. By providing background of how the US military complex operates, and the role governments and diplomats play on not challenging the systems its citizens reject- he reminded us of the deep wisdom of the Quaker tradition: we need peace through dialogue, mutual respect, negotiation,



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not through bombing, regime change and military escalation. We need the Quaker voices to reinforce that diplomacy is the only way to security.

Dr. Bama Athreya, *former Deputy Assistant Administrator, USAID; Board member, Faith in Democracy*

We cannot lose hope, and we need to work to educate as many people as possible.

Dr. Athreya gave an overview of the dismantling of USAID and other institutions, and shared the efforts being made to capture and harness information in real-time (examples of different methods of sharing the information provided in the slides). She encouraged continued direct action to get Congress reengaged with constitutional democracy. The more people pay attention, the more likely it is that some legislators will find their spine and speak out.

Laura Davis: *CEO, Arianne Thread Consulting and author of EU Foreign Policy, Transitional Justice and Mediation: Principle, Policy and Practice*

It is in the dark days when you need to hold onto your principles and values the most.

Davis spoke from the EU perspective- drawing attention to the structure of the EU and the importance of the civilian power outlined by the early EU treaties. Quakers are in a very good position to unite and provide a platform to bring in cross-transnational discussions and campaigns across the EU and beyond. EU citizens need to ensure that the governments actually abide by the treaties of citizens' power.

Upcoming Series

Recording will be posted on the AFSC website

Session II: The U.S. Administration's Global Impact-USAID Freeze and Shifts in U.S. Immigration Policy: July 21-23, 2025, | Cape Town, South Africa

Session III: Global Gathering of Local Peacebuilders and Their Allies: October 13-17, 2025 | Nairobi, Kenya

Session IV: Information to Follow, Brussels Belgium

Resources:

- Friends of Aid- helpful and concise information on Instagram
- Atlantic Council Centre for Global Development: resource for sharing information
- One Aid Community