



NEW ENGLAND
YEARLY MEETING
OF FRIENDS
QUAKERS

Statement on Conflict in Israel-Palestine

November 3, 2023

These troubled weeks have brought yet again a devastating eruption of the long suffering caused by the conflict in Israel-Palestine. With anxiety and heartbreak, we witness the horrors unfolding in Gaza, Israel, the West Bank, and beyond. The global community of Quakers, of which we are a part, includes Friends with deep roots and relationships in the land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan. As violence has expanded and intensified in recent days, alongside continuing strife raging across the globe and violence in our own region, we write on behalf of the Quaker faith communities in the six New England states to offer our prayers and raise our voices and hands for the healing of the world.

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) holds that every person has the capacity to receive and respond to the love and guidance of God. All human beings are created and unconditionally beloved by God. We are dependent on one another, and it is through our relationships—as persons and as societies—that our lives make real our love for God and neighbor. We join our voices with all who strive to meet the sacred obligations to acknowledge and honor the belovedness and dignity of every person, every life.

We affirm again the declaration of the first Quakers in 1660:

“We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretense whatsoever; and this is our testimony to the whole world. The spirit of Christ by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it; and we do certainly know, and so testify to the world, that the spirit of Christ, which leads us into all Truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world.”

We are called to reflect and pray more deeply, resisting reactivity, aggression, self-justification, and othering of those we experience as enemies. We must recognize and resist the escalating pressures throughout our human family that attempt to justify atrocities against fellow human beings. We remember that we are each capable of evil, even in the name of good. And we are called to daily examine and reject the seeds of war in our own hearts and living, through God’s help.


Promoting adherence to universal humanitarian values, and to the essential use of nonviolent methods to resolve differences, is not simply an option but a necessity for the survival of the human family. With humility and boldness, we take up and renew a commitment to turn from indulging our own hostile impulses, from the fostering of division within our local communities,

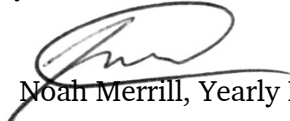
and from the rush to violence and escalating cycles of retributive action in conflicts worldwide, and turn toward the courageous work of peacebuilding.

We join with people throughout the world calling for an immediate ceasefire and for the provision of desperately needed humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza. We affirm and support the ongoing work of the [Friends Committee on National Legislation](#) and the [American Friends Service Committee](#) in their advocacy and service in support of a just peace for all. We unite with this [recent statement on Gaza](#) issued by wider Quaker bodies and Friends organizations of which we are a member.

Let us each continue to seek paths to participate in the work of peace, in whatever ways and with whatever tools are available to us. We are called to act in faith, with persistence, patience, and courage, as partners with Divine Love in the deep healing of the world.

New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)


Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk


Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary

RL/NM:sh

99 Raft Cove Road
Trescott Township, ME. 04652
June 10, 2024

Letters to the Editor
Bangor Daily News
P.O. Box 1329
Bangor, ME 04402

Dear Editor:

Cobscook Friends (Quaker) Meeting, located in Whiting, Maine, is joining other congregations and faith traditions in advocating for peace in Israel and Palestine. Atrocities have been committed by both Hamas and the Israeli government.

People are suffering. Resources are being used for the destruction of all forms of life. The ongoing fighting will only ensure one thing, that the unimaginable losses will continue. We support an immediate cease fire and negotiations for a way forward in which systemic injustices are addressed and the right of all people are honored.

Cobscook Friends Meeting holds these ideas up for examination and reflection. In this, we echo the many calls for an end to the violence and destruction in Palestine and Israel.

Sincerely,

Co-clerks Beth Clifford and Janet Weston

Minute from Durham Friends Meeting on Palestine and Israel
Approved at Monthly Meeting March 17, 2024

“We are heartbroken by the violence in Israel and Palestine. As Quakers, we deeply mourn the loss of all lives and pray for those who have lost loved ones due to this latest escalation. We unequivocally condemn Hamas’ attacks and inhumane treatment of civilians and call for the release of all hostages. We also condemn Israel’s indiscriminate bombing of Gaza that has claimed thousands of civilian lives. More war and weapons won’t bring peace. In the face of growing violence, lawmakers must push for a permanent ceasefire and address the root causes underlying this explosion of violence.”

American Friends Service Committee

As members of the Religious Society of Friends, and people of conscience and good will, we call upon our elected representatives to initiate negotiations for a permanent cease fire among the warring parties; to provide adequate funding for humanitarian assistance, including full funding for the United Nations efforts; and to end military assistance to Israel.

Quakers have had a long and sustained interest in Palestine, going back to efforts by Quakers from Maine to establish the Ramallah Friends School, for our support and care for Jewish refugees prior to, during and after World War II, and for our presence in Palestine and Jordan since 1948. Our commitment to peace through nonviolence is an essential element of our faith and our practice in the world. We can no longer stand by and watch the atrocities being committed with our tax dollars, our weapons and materials and our policies of unwavering support and complicity. We pray that this will no longer be done in our names.

Nancy Marstaller
Acting Clerk

Approved at Falmouth Quarter
April, 2024

HARTFORD MONTHLY MEETING

MINUTE CALLING FOR AN END TO ALL VIOLENCE in ISRAEL and PALESTINE

We, as members of the Hartford Monthly Meeting community of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), call for the end to all actions that lead to the destruction of lives in Gaza, the West Bank and Israel.

It is our most deeply held belief that every human life is precious and sacred and that the national, ethnic, and religious boundaries that divide one people from another and generate hate and violence are creations of humans, not the divine.

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) declaration renouncing all forms of violence dates to 1660:

“We utterly deny all outward wars, strife, and fighting with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretense whatsoever; and this is our testimony to the whole world.”

In the 21st century, the weapons of violence and destruction are exponentially greater than those at the time of this Quaker testimony.

Now is the time to end this horrific violence and create a path for reconciliation to restore safety and peace. Continuing violence, which we utterly deny, is not the answer.

Mt. Toby Friends Meeting's Call for an Immediate Ceasefire in Gaza

As Friends (Quakers), we respect the humanity of all people, which is why we have sought non-violent responses to conflict anywhere. Our experience teaches us that violence only creates hatred, fear, hopelessness, and endless new cycles of war and terrorism. Our faith teaches us to seek peaceful and non-violent solutions to conflicts of all kinds.

We were horrified by the violence of the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7th, but we have also been horrified by the enormous escalation of violence that has occurred since the Israeli armed forces invaded Gaza on October 27. Since Israel started its counterattack, close to 34,000 Gazans have died as of mid-April 2024, with around one-third of those being children. UNICEF has stated that Gaza is currently the most dangerous place in the world to be a child. Israel has placed severe limits on the number of aid trucks allowed into Gaza, so that famine conditions now exist there. Sanitary conditions are abominable, with clean water almost impossible to find. Hospitals have been attacked and rendered non-functional. Many civilians are unable to find any shelter, as much of Gaza has been reduced to rubble. Doctors, journalists, and healthcare and humanitarian aid workers have described the conditions and level of violence in Gaza as having an “unprecedented” impact on its civilian population.

It has been heart-breaking to witness the level of destruction and suffering created by the invasion. The fact that our own US bombs, tanks, guns, and tax dollars are carrying out this violence against the civilian population of Gaza makes this also our war, not just Israel's, and hence one that we must help stop.

We, therefore, call for:

- a complete cessation of violence, including the bombardment and land invasion of Gaza by the Israeli Defense Force
- an end to blockades by Israel against humanitarian assistance, the reinstatement of funding for UNRWA, and a worldwide effort to provide life-saving, humanitarian aid for those in Gaza
- the return of hostages and political prisoners from both sides of the conflict
- guarantees for the safety and security of all the people in Gaza, Israel, and the West Bank.

We ask our President and elected representatives to do all they can to bring about a permanent ceasefire and to take practical steps to ensure that U.S. tax dollars and weapons will no longer be used to support this or any other war directed against civilian populations.

The above steps will only bring an end to the immediate destruction and suffering. Important as this is, unless we also act to remove the causes of the existing fear and hatred on both sides, the cycle of violence will return, perhaps in even more extreme form. It is therefore essential that a cease fire be followed by comprehensive negotiations addressing the entirety of the Israel-Palestine conflict, led by the UN or other impartial body, to achieve a lasting solution on the grassroots level that affirms the dignity, empowerment, and safety of all those living in Gaza, Israel, and the West Bank.

2024.24: Minute on Israel Palestine

Northampton Friends Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) calls and prays for the end to all actions that lead to the destruction of lives in Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel. Despite the complexities of the Palestinian Israeli conflict, the violence must stop immediately for those at war to be able to discern a viable future for all involved.

To the children of God involved in all sides of the violence, we call for you to embrace an immediate and enduring ceasefire. We beseech you to consider that further violence without any hope of a peaceful understanding will only destroy both your peoples, materially, morally, and spiritually, and will continue to ripple out to the rest of the world. Now is the time to end the violence and create a path to a future for your children with restored safety and peace.

To President Biden, the Administration, and the U.S. Congress, we call on you to exert your leadership and influence to end the violent hostilities immediately and persuade all parties to the conflict to move towards peaceful negotiations.

To this end, we call upon all parties involved and complicit in the current violence to:

- Stop all military action.
- Open the free flow of drinking water, food, fuel, and medical supplies.
- Release all hostages and political prisoners.
- Resume negotiations in search of a lasting peace.

As members of the Religious Society of Friends, we see that of God in every person and know that each life is sacred and divine. Through our government, we feel complicit in the financing, aiding, and abetting of the current violence and the obstruction of the free flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza. Therefore, in addition to the above, we call upon President Biden, the Administration, and the U.S. Congress to:

- Resume the funding of United Nations humanitarian assistance.
- Support United Nations efforts to achieve a ceasefire and the release of all hostages.
- Withhold or stop all U.S. military aid and equipment used in this conflict.
- Take steps to ensure that the U.S. is not a party to potential genocide.

We're saddened that this present conflict has disrupted lives in other parts of the world, too, including here at home. As a faith community, we condemn all forms of anti-Semitic, Islamophobic, and anti-Arab actions locally, in the United States, and globally.

We call upon other faith communities to join us in this stance and in our call for peace everywhere.



Portland Friends Meeting

Statement of Portland Friends Meeting regarding War in Gaza

Approved by Portland Friends Meeting, March 3, 2024

As Quakers we believe that there is that of the Divine in each and every person and therefore every life is precious. We are horrified by the violence and loss of life in Israel and Palestine. We feel the killing and inhumane treatment of civilians is abhorrent, whether perpetrated by the government of Israel, Hamas or other forces in the area. We recognize that we are complicit in the perpetuation of violence and abuse through the actions and policies of our government.

This crisis that began in 1948 when 700,00 Palestinians were displaced to make room for the state of Israel is complicated, but all people need a safe place to live where they can access food, shelter, healthcare, work, and education. We believe the violence we are witnessing today is sowing seeds for future conflict. Only with a ceasefire can we start to address the root causes of this and future conflicts.

This war has escalated violence in neighboring Middle East countries, disrupting lives of more innocent civilians. International laws have been broken. Here at home, we stand against the surge of Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in our local communities and throughout the United States.

We urge the US government and our representatives in Congress:

- To call for a permanent ceasefire;
- To fully support delivery of humanitarian aid in the area;
- To negotiate the release of all the Israeli and Palestinian hostages;
- To work diplomatically to address de-escalation in the region; and
- To stop supporting the Israeli military with funding and with weapons manufactured in the U.S.

In response to this horrific situation, Portland Friends Meeting made the following decision on March 3, 2024:

Portland Friends Meeting found unity to make a donation of \$75,000 from our Shared Witness Fund to the American Friends Service Committee to support humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza and the West Bank. While our priority is to address urgent human needs, we trust AFSC will use these funds wisely to confront the full challenges of the situation.

In conjunction with this donation, we acknowledge that our work is not done, and we remain complicit in violence through the actions of our government. We challenge ourselves and each other to reach deeply and contribute what we can to address humanitarian needs, and to use our gifts of every sort for the expression of Love in the face of horror, which may involve actions that confront the policies and funding that perpetrate violence.

To: Salem Quarterly Meeting and NEYM Permanent Board

From: Wellesley Friends Meeting, Anne Nydam, Clerk

RE: Statement on Gaza, Israel, and the West Bank by Wellesley Friends (Quaker) Meeting

May 11, 2024

Statement on Gaza, Israel, and the West Bank by Wellesley Friends (Quaker)
Meeting

Eleventh Month 19, 2023

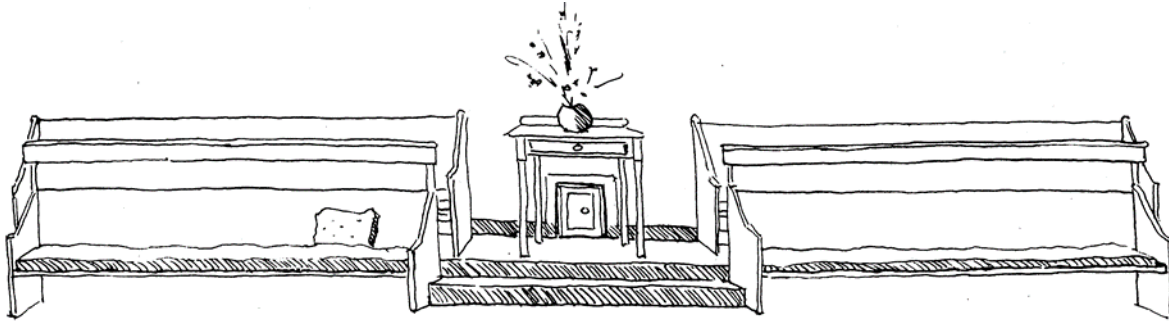
“There is a Spirit that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong. Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty.”

James Nayler, 17th century Quaker

Wellesley Friends are deeply grieved by the ongoing tragedy in Gaza, Israel, and the West Bank. We bear witness to the suffering, and urgently call for a ceasefire, ending the siege of Gaza, and the release of all people held as hostages.

As an historic peace church we envision a world where our emphasis is on a God of Love who instructs us to love one another, including those who do us ill. We know that violence begets more violence. We reject as false the mythology of “redemptive violence”, that “good violence” will somehow end “bad violence”.

We urge our nation to find a policy that promotes the well-being of all.



Minute Concerning the War in Israel-Palestine

We recognize the war now being fought between Israel and Hamas is rooted in tragic complexity that has resulted in more and more suffering since October 7. We recognize brilliant minds and compassionate hearts have sought since 1948 to bring peace to the region of Israel and Palestine, yet war or the threat of war has remained a constant in that region for 76 years. We recognize there are no words we can say, even if expressed with soaring eloquence and impeccable logic, that would cause people at war in Israel and Palestine, upon hearing them, to lay down their weapons and live in peace.

At the same time, we know that to be silent is to be complicit in the suffering war brings to everyone involved. If people of peace and goodwill do not speak out, then we contribute, no matter how little, to delaying when peace finally arrives. Such a delay, even if it is for a day, is too long for anyone threatened by violence.

And so we now reaffirm our faith that the Inner Light is to be found in every heart. With this as our guide and our support, we believe that all war is an abomination and contrary to the will of God as we understand it. We also believe that peace is still possible in this region of the world. Peace, however, is not a gift, no matter how fervently it may be desired. Peace is gained by engaging in a process that requires skill, resources, courage and commitment.

As part of this process,
we call upon the leaders of Hamas and their allies to:

- return all hostages taken on October 7, both living and dead, to Israel
- recognize Israel as a sovereign nation with an unambiguous right to exist

we call upon the leaders of Israel to:

- cease the bombing that has resulted in massive civilian casualties in Gaza
- move toward the creation of a two-state solution

we call upon the leaders of the world to:

- provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza in whatever quantity is needed as expeditiously as possible
- create a multi-national peace-keeping force in Gaza for as many years as needed
- work in unison with Israelis and Palestinians on facilitating a two-state solution

we call upon the Congress of the United States to:

- restructure US Foreign Aid policy whereby nations receiving US military equipment are obligated to seek international arbitration to end conflicts, especially those leading to the merciless destruction and death of civilian communities.

We call upon the people of the United States to:

- refrain from antisemitic and Islamophobic words and actions and to denounce them whenever they are expressed

Approved at Westerly Monthly Meeting on June 9, 2024

Revised during a Called Meeting, June 13, 2024

Ann Watkins, Westerly Month Meeting, clerk

David Madden, Peace and Social Justice Committee, clerk