

# Talking about the Israel-Palestine War in Your Community

## Resources for Dialogue

As violence in Israel and Palestine continues, many Friends want their meeting or church to find its voice as a community. At the same time, the layers, history, and emotional charge of this conflict can make these conversations and the discernment around corporate witness a challenge.

Living a testimony for peace begins with how we listen to and care for each other. As FCNL heard time and again when we have asked Friends to discern together around other contentious issues in the past, when held with tenderness, these conversations can strengthen communities even when there is disagreement and conflict.

The way these conversations happen matters. Here are some suggestions for holding a conversation in your meeting, church, or other group.

- **Understand the goal of the conversation.** Why are you entering into it, and what outcome are you seeking?
- **Consider what preparation would be helpful for people entering into the conversation.** For example, the group Essential Partners offers a worksheet to help people identify their perspectives beforehand. Consider sharing resources in advance to help participants avoid anti-Semitic and Islamophobic speech as they communicate their views.
- **Take the time to build trust and understanding.** It can be tempting to rush to a conclusion, statement, or other next steps. Know that the process of listening to others' perspectives can often lead to unexpected paths forward and a stronger community, regardless of whether you reach an agreement on a particular action or policy recommendation.
- **Recognize the ways that identity intersects with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.** Avoid making assumptions or generalizations about how groups feel or what they want. Be curious. If you are clerking or facilitating, consider checking in with people individually beforehand to understand where they are coming from.
- **Use communication agreements to provide guardrails for challenging conversations.** These might include speaking only for yourself, not interrupting others, and sharing the time. These agreements can be helpful to develop as a group and make explicit, even if you are holding your dialogue within another structure, such as a Quaker business meeting, where some guidelines are assumed.

- **Encourage people to consider and share what has shaped their views on this issue.** What is at the heart of this issue for each person? What about their experience or values have influenced their perspectives?
- **If the conversation is slipping into debate, or you don't know where to go next, encourage people to talk about a life experience or person who shaped their perspective.** Sharing personal stories can build empathy and understanding, even across differences.
- **Be attuned to the need for a pause** or moment to reflect when conversations get heated.

## Resources and Recommended Further Reading

- *Essential Partners* guides to dialogue, including a resource on *having healthier conversations about this conflict*.
- *“How to Start a Hard Conversation about the Israel-Hamas War,”* by Darryl C. Murphy, Frannie Monahan, and Katelyn Harrop, WBUR
- *Teaching about the Israel-Hamas War*, New York Times
- *Braver Angels* offers several short e-courses to build skills in bridging divides, engaging in families, and managing difficult conversations.

See *minutes* approved by Quaker meetings and churches on this issue. If your organization, church, or meeting has approved a minute, statement, or resource, please email it to [Quakers@fcnl.org](mailto:Quakers@fcnl.org) to include it in this collection.

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