

Minute concerning the conflict in Israel and Palestine – Orchard Park (NY) Friends Meeting

Every life is precious, whether this human being, this father, child, mother, brother or sister, is Israeli, Palestinian, Ukrainian or Russian. As Quakers and members of the Orchard Park Friends Meeting, we know this to be true. Life is sacred. We also know that history proves that retaliatory violence is a failure (e.g., wars of retribution in Iraq and Afghanistan). Violence unleashes more violence. Only peace with justice will establish a lasting peace where all people can live sustainable lives, including economic, environmental, religious freedom and human rights.

We condemn the violence unleashed by Hamas, and we denounce the retribution of the Israeli Defense Force on Gaza. What happens when the death and destruction on both sides have worn themselves out? What is the plan for ensuring peace going forward? The combatants see only the immediate righteous chaos; not what follows, not what will bring an end to the brutality and oppression that are the legacy of war. Our hearts grieve: There are no winners.

We urge our government not to add to the violence; we deplore sending military supplies and weapons to the region.

We commend the ongoing peace efforts in the Middle East. The international diplomats and government representatives who are going about the process of seeking peace deserve our support and our prayers. They are not only focusing on the immediate crisis, but also on establishing a long-term peace. We add our voices to the many who advocate humanitarian aid for the people of Gaza as they seek to escape, indeed, seek to survive the immediate crisis.

We urge our government to call for an immediate ceasefire, immediate and adequate humanitarian aid, and negotiations for a long-term peace.

As Quakers, we believe each life is sacred.