

The Urbana-Champaign Friends Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends urges an immediate cease-fire in the war on Gaza as well as safe and speedy passage for humanitarian aid for all those suffering from the conflict. We are heartsick over the violence in Gaza and Israel and the desperate plight of civilians. 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 Israel's violent, indiscriminate, and disproportionate response to Hamas that has already claimed tens of thousands of Palestinian lives, at least half children, and displaced 85% of the Gaza population. We further condemn the Hamas attacks on Israel and the inhumane treatment of civilians; we call for the release of all hostages.

Quakers have advocated for peace since our founding during the 17th century English Civil Wars. They wrote to King Charles II in 1660 that war is morally wrong:

“Our principle is, and our practices have always been, to seek peace and ensue it... All bloody principles and practices, as to our own particulars, we utterly deny; with all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretense whatsoever; this is our testimony to the whole world.”

It remains our testimony today.

More war and weapons won't bring peace. In the face of continuing violence, lawmakers must:

- Publicly call for a ceasefire, de-escalation, and respect for international law.
- Protect lives—those of the hostages and all civilians, including the roughly 1 million children who live in Gaza.
- Address the root causes underlying this explosion of violence, including decades of institutionalized oppression and collective punishment of Palestinians through brutal military occupation and a 16-year Gaza blockade. Collective punishment is a war crime.

We urge Congress to call for an immediate ceasefire, de-escalation, and restraint to prevent further civilian harm in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

- **Approved in the regular Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business of Urbana-Champaign Friends Meeting (Quakers), January 21, 2024**