

Clearwater Friends Meeting will publish the following minute in the April 21 issue of the Tampa Bay Times.

A Call to End Conflict in Israel-Palestine

We are heartbroken by the terror, violence, and devastation in Israel and Palestine. War is never the answer. War does not address the root causes of a conflict or resolve injustices; it only settles which nation can mobilize its fighting forces best. It makes enemies more entrenched in 'us vs. them' and revenge narratives. It deepens hatred and increases enmities and violence, making all people less safe. War is a betrayal of our humanity, and of what is most sacred.

Our Quaker faith reminds us that there is that of God within every person, without exception. And that every person has the capacity to experience and respond to the love and guidance of God. We unconditionally oppose bigotry against Jews, Palestinians and other Arabs and Muslims that has led to the rise in hateful rhetoric and actions targeting these communities in the United States and worldwide.

We unite with the calls of people across the world for:

1. an immediate lasting ceasefire and a total end to hostilities on the way to a genuine effort towards peaceful and just solutions,
2. immediate release of all hostages and prisoners held under administrative detention without charges or trial,
3. provision of urgent humanitarian aid to Gaza including resumption of funding for United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

The government of the United States has a responsibility to think with greater vision rather than contributing to the further militarizing of a tragic situation. We urge the President and Congress to join with other nations to address the roots of war, to work for a lasting solution that provides for security, justice, and dignity for all Palestinians and Israelis.

Our faith challenges us to resist the escalating pressures throughout our human family that attempt to justify atrocities against other human beings, and to remember that we are each capable of evil, even in the name of good. We take up the commitment to turn from our own hostile impulses, from amplifying division within our local communities, and from the cycles of vengeful action in conflicts worldwide, so we can move toward the courageous work of peacebuilding.

Let us seek paths to work for peace, to act in faith and love, with persistence, patience, and courage. We ask everyone, including those in power, to learn from and work with the peacebuilders, who have labored long and hard. May they lead us all in creating an enduring peace built on justice and reconciliation that provides safety, sovereignty, and a future free of war as Palestinians, Israelis and all people of the region become partners pursuing the sacred goal of Peace, Shalom, Salaam.

The Clearwater Friends Meeting, Clearwaterfriends.org, (Quakers) approved this statement on the Israeli-Palestine conflict on April 7, 2024 following its adoption in March 2024 by the Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. Comments/questions may be sent to peace@clearwaterfriends.org