

## **Peace, Justice, and Social Concerns Statement on the War in Gaza**

As members and attenders of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) at Whitewater Monthly Meeting in Richmond IN, we believe that any dispute cannot be resolved through violence. We choose to advocate relentlessly for the end of suffering. Radical peacemaking requires us to engage with and to acknowledge truth in all its discomfort, complexity, and cruelty. Quakers have historically spoken truth to power. We need to heed the promptings of love and truth in our hearts and speak up now.

The Israeli government has deepened its collective punishment of Palestinians for the heinous crimes of Hamas on October 7, 2023.

Over the last ten months, we have witnessed the deliberate mass starvation of a people and dismantling of almost all life-sustaining systems within Gaza. We have seen the forced movement of Palestinians and a stated intention to expel them from Gaza. We have heard Israeli government ministers incite hatred against and dehumanize Palestinians. We have heard language and witnessed actions that cannot be justified and strike at the core of our common humanity.

Central to Quakerism is the experience that there is that of God in everyone. From this belief--that all people are unique, precious children of God-- we abhor racism, including antisemitism and anti-Palestinianism, in all their forms. We grieve the pain and fear that our friends in Jewish and Arab communities are experiencing.

We cry out for the violence in Gaza to stop—for an end to the killing of Palestinians and for the Israeli hostages to be released. We cry out for the release of Palestinian children held in military prisons. We cry out against the weaponization of humanitarian aid, food distribution, and medical relief. We cry out to the government of Israel to stop targeting churches, mosques, hospitals, and schools in their bombing. We pray for Palestinians and Israelis alike to be safe, and to live thriving, hopeful, and joyful lives free from fear. Everyone deserves a place to live in dignity and peace, and to share in the fullness of a meaningful life.

We honor and uphold Jewish communities, in Israel and worldwide, who are working for peace and justice for Palestinians. At the same time, we must speak clearly: it is the government of Israel, not the Jewish people as a whole, that we believe is committing genocide against the Palestinian people.

It is a tenet of Quakerism that violence can never be the answer. This is our Peace Testimony that has led us for more than 350 years to always avoid all war and all violence at all times. Our long work for peace tells us that security for some bought with the insecurity of others, tears at our collective humanity and is only temporary. Peace can never be brought about by the systematic oppression of others.

We, therefore, use the word 'genocide' after deep discernment. We use this term with the aim of opening eyes, minds, and hearts. We use this word in the deep hope that the actions it describes will stop.

We hold in the light the people governing Israel and Palestine and pray that they are moved towards peace and compassion.

Approved by Monthly Meeting for Worship for Business, Whitewater Monthly Meeting  
(First Friends Meeting), September 21, 2025