

*We are a people that follow after those things that make for peace, love, and unity;  
it is our desire that others' feet may walk in the same,  
and do deny and bear our testimony against all strife, and wars.*

Margaret Fell, Founding member of the Religious Society of Friends

*The denial of our duty to act is a bold denial of our right to act.*

Lucretia Mott, Quaker Women's Rights Advocate and Abolitionist

## Quaker organizations call for a ceasefire and humanitarian protections in Gaza

October 17, 2023

Quakers believe in the sacred worth of each person and stand against violence in all its forms. As Quaker organizations, we mourn all lives lost and lament with everyone who is suffering. We grieve for those in Israel and Palestine who have lost precious lives. We pray with those waiting for the return of loved ones and those living under siege and bombardment.

The Hamas attack on Israel on October 7 killed over 1,300 Israelis, and civilian hostages were taken by Hamas into Gaza. As of October 16, the subsequent Israeli military attack on Gaza had killed at least 2,950 Palestinians, including over 1,030 children. It had displaced more than one million Palestinians in Gaza, with over 7,500 homes destroyed. Today, on October 17, we are deeply saddened at additional losses, especially the bombing of the Al-Ahli Hospital, with reports of at least 500 casualties. These numbers will continue to rise if attacks do not end.

Violence such as this is never justifiable, and we insist that a ceasefire must be realized along with the return of all hostages.

Following the start of Israel's attack, Israel also intensified its siege of Gaza, blocking access to water, food, fuel, electricity, and medicine in an act of collective punishment. It directly impacts all people in Gaza. People are going hungry and thirsty, and thousands are injured. Medicine is running out, hospitals do not have power and are operating on generators with limited fuel supplies, and overwhelmed medical facilities cannot help those in need. People are dying as a preventable humanitarian crisis deepens.

The many faith traditions represented in the region share a religious obligation to feed the hungry, care for the sick and wounded, and protect the most vulnerable from violence. The

moral authority of the international community will be evaluated based on its response to the needs of communities in peril. The time for action is now.

Quakers have a long history of carrying out humanitarian assistance and leading efforts to build peace in situations of conflict. We hold that principles under International Humanitarian Law, including the 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention, must be respected. The Israeli government must grant access and safety to the U.N. and humanitarian agencies to fulfill their duties. Instead of further bloodshed, we need immediate humanitarian access for Gaza and adherence to international humanitarian and human rights law. We demand that national leaders, faith leaders, and journalists use their power and influence to bring a bold voice for humanitarian protection and to end ongoing war crimes. Wherever there have been war crimes and violations of International Humanitarian Law, there must be accountability.

We also call on Israeli and international leaders to firmly disavow dehumanizing anti-Palestinian rhetoric and approaches that deepen painful divisions and politicize the current crisis. All efforts must focus on moving us away from an irreparable calamity. Strong leadership for peace – peace that addresses legitimate rights and needs and enables all parties to recognize each other’s humanity – is required.

Further military action will not bring peace. We know this as Quakers who are committed to peace and as students of history. That is why we are calling for an immediate ceasefire and humanitarian access, and action to address the underlying injustice of occupation and inequalities underlying this situation in the long term.

Our conviction that peace will prevail on earth, as the scriptures of the great religions of the world have promised, struggles to find its footing amid such incredible violence and suffering. This is a time for strong moral resolve, spiritual fortitude, and immediate action.

We call on international leaders of all countries to bear witness to this message and show the way of peace.



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