

Quakers Discern Genocide is Occurring in Gaza and Urge Courageous Action

"We are for justice and mercy and truth and peace and true freedom."

— Edward Burrough, 1659

As Quakers, we recognize the divine imprint in every human being and confess the equality of all to live safely and without fear.

We are also compelled as Quakers to speak truth with integrity, including where it is uncomfortable, yet always to do so in love. This requires us to speak against the catastrophic violence in Gaza.

Friends have a long history of working for peaceful coexistence and justice for all people in the Middle East. We have witnessed times when Jews, Muslims, and Christians have enjoyed peace and cooperation in the region. Since the creation of the state of Israel, our organizations have supported nonviolent efforts among both Palestinians and Israelis to protect human rights, prevent violence, address the root causes of conflict, and promote peacebuilding. We still believe a peaceful future for all peoples is possible.

However, through our decades of humanitarian work and accompaniment with Palestinian and Israeli communities we have witnessed the relentless erosion of justice. This lack of justice and the current violence is rooted in the systemic and violent dispossession of Palestinians from their lands and decades of occupation, apartheid policies, and the systematic denial of Palestinian rights.

This history contextualizes the atrocities that are being perpetrated against Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank today by Israel's military and government – the starvation campaigns, mass killings, mass deportations, ethnic cleansing, settler violence, and calculated erasure of life. These are not isolated horrors, but the brutal continuation of a 76-year project of displacement and denial of Palestinians' human rights.

These decades of dispossession, oppression, occupation, and violence are the backdrop to the cycles of violence in the region including the attacks, killings, abductions, and trauma suffered by Israelis on October 7, 2023.

After deep communal and prayerful discernment, informed by our direct witness in Palestine/Israel and our readings of the positions of international human rights organizations, international and Israeli genocide scholars, and experts on the UN Genocide Convention (1948), **we are exercising our religious conviction to speak the truth as we see it. We believe with moral clarity, and in line with the definition of the crime of genocide, that the current actions in Gaza perpetrated by the Israeli government, constitute genocide.**

Our peace and equality testimonies are clear: Apparent security for some, bought with the insecurity of others, tears at our shared humanity and cannot bring peace. Peace built on systematic oppression is a lie. We name what we see as genocide after deep discernment – not to incite, but to open eyes, minds, and hearts. We name this painful truth with the fervent hope that the violence it describes will cease, and with continued commitment to help heal the wounds of war on all sides

Since the 7th of October 2023, we have witnessed the following realities:

- Approximately 1,200 Israelis killed, including over 800 civilians, 36 of them children, over 3,300 injured and 223 people abducted on October 7, 2023.
- Over 57,000 Palestinians directly killed in Gaza, with estimates of the number of people killed as a result of both the direct and indirect impacts of war rising as high as 300,000.
- In Gaza, at least 17,000 children killed, more than 35,000 injured, over 50,000 children lost at least one of their parents. Between 3,000 and 4,000 children in Gaza have had one or more limbs amputated – the highest figure for child amputees globally.
- Nearly 10,000 Palestinians held in Israeli military detention, over 3,500 of them without any charge or trial, and in facilities where they are regularly subject to violence, sexual abuse, torture, and killing.
- Over 200 Palestinian journalists killed.
- Deliberate mass starvation through the systematic obstruction of food, water, and medicine. which has claimed many lives.
- The destruction over 70% of homes.
- Over 1,450 recorded attacks on health workers, patients, hospitals, and medical infrastructure with at least 1,500 health care workers killed and over 85% of hospitals bombed or besieged. Remaining facilities are systematically denied fuel and electricity – cutting power to incubators, dialysis machines, and operating theaters, directly causing preventable deaths.
- Forced displacement of 1.9 million people amid calls to erase Gaza and for the ethnic cleansing of the population.
- State-sanctioned dehumanization and incitement by officials with Palestinians called "human animals" and with politicians, media, and soldiers celebrating killings of civilians.

Article II of the UN Genocide Convention defines genocide as acts committed "with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group". We believe the Israeli actions in Gaza meet this threshold.

We cry out equally for the **protection of free speech and the right to protest**. The moral urgency of this moment demands space for dissent. Across the world, those calling for a free Palestine, an end to genocide, and compliance with international law face censorship, smear campaigns, and legislative criminalization and repression. This silencing – often falsely equating support for Palestinian rights and/or anti-Zionism with antisemitism – undermines integrity and is a betrayal of democracy and a tool of genocide denial. Quakers know well that speaking truth to power requires the freedom to dissent. This is reflected in the growing numbers of conscientious objectors who take the moral stand and refuse to participate in the atrocities through military service. We reaffirm our belief in the human dignity of all people and our opposition to all forms of discrimination.

All states have a legal duty under the Genocide Convention to prevent genocide. We call for:

1. An Immediate, Permanent Ceasefire & Full Humanitarian Access
 - All parties must recommit to diplomacy and dialogue in order to reach a permanent ceasefire, ending all hostilities.
 - Israel must open border crossings for unrestricted aid.
 - The international community must fully fund UNRWA and other involved UN agencies.
2. The Application of Robust, Targeted, and Timebound Sanctions, including a Comprehensive Arms Embargo, aimed at ending Israel's genocide in Gaza and the related system of Apartheid.
 - *Diplomatic*: Use all diplomatic channels to exert pressure, including by denying visas to officials inciting or justifying genocide/apartheid.
 - *Economic*: Suspend trade agreements and ban settlement goods devastating Palestinian livelihoods.
 - *Financial*: Freeze assets of officials and settler militias; block transactions funding oppression.
 - *Military*: Halt all arms sales, transfers, and military cooperation with Israel
 - *Transport*: Block cargo sustaining genocide or apartheid.
3. Respect for International Law and Accountability
 - The international community must hold Israel accountable to International Law and support the order of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) seeking provisional measures to prevent further harm, and remove any obstacles to

support the International Criminal Court (ICC) investigations and rulings into war crimes and crimes against humanity, including apartheid.

- Demand transparent government reports on compliance with legal duties to prevent genocide and apartheid.

4. Protection of Free Speech and the Right to Protest

- Legislatures must reject all institutional efforts to criminalize solidarity with Palestine.
- Authorities must safeguard students, academics, workers, and activists from censorship, cyber harassment, or retaliation for advocating Palestinian rights, while ensuring public spaces remain open for peaceful assemblies demanding ceasefire and justice.
- Media outlets must center Palestinian voices, commit to facts without bias, and amplify independent journalism documenting Gaza's reality.

5. Dismantling of Oppression and Establishing a Just and Permanent Peace

- End the occupation and apartheid policies across Palestine.
- Uphold Palestinian self-determination and refugees' right of return.
- Ensure equal rights, dignity, and security for Palestinians and Israelis and challenge efforts to silence them – rejecting any system privileging one group over another.

As Quaker signatories, we commit to:

- Advocate relentlessly for the end of the Israeli genocide in Gaza and the deliberate starvation campaign, a permanent ceasefire and accountability for atrocities committed in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.
- Boycott settlement goods and divest from companies profiting from occupation, apartheid, or genocide (e.g., arms manufacturers, settlement financiers).
- Reach out in love to Jewish, Muslim and Palestinian communities, confronting antisemitism, anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian hate while refusing to be silent in the face of oppression.
- Highlight the voices of Palestinians, which have still been all-too-absent from media narratives.

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- Support humanitarian relief for Gaza and communities suffering under occupation in the West Bank.
- Advocate for the universal human rights of all people in Palestine and Israel—ensuring they can live in freedom and dignity, without fear, and with lasting peace and security.

We hold in the Light all suffering peoples and leaders, praying they choose justice. In Palestine and Israel, peace built on equality is the only path forward.



*American Friends Service Committee
Canadian Friends Service Committee
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Friends World Committee for Consultation
World Office*

*Quakers in Britain/ Quaker Peace and Social Witness
Quaker Council on European Affairs
Quaker Service Norway
Quaker United Nations Office*

We invite Friends meetings and groups to **discuss, discern, and endorse the statement.**