

Quaker Responses to Israel/Palestine Conflict

FCNL

Washington, DC - The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) condemned the attack by Hamas on Israel and Israel's retaliatory violence while calling on world leaders to press for de-escalation and restraint in Gaza and southern Israel moving forward. FCNL also reminded policymakers that violence committed by Hamas does not justify the collective punishment of nearly two million Palestinian civilians living in Gaza.

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“As Quakers, we deeply mourn the loss of all lives and pray for those who have lost loved ones due to this latest escalation,” said Bridget Moix, FCNL's general secretary. “We firmly condemn all violence against civilians and urge the U.S. government and global leaders to prioritize an immediate ceasefire, de-escalation and restraint to prevent further civilian harm.”

These tragic events, including the deaths of hundreds of Israeli and Palestinian civilians and the taking of dozens of Israeli prisoners, underscore the pressing need to ensure self-determination, equality, and fundamental human rights for Israelis and Palestinians alike. Authentic security is attainable through the promotion of a culture of peace, including a healthy environment, economic opportunity, democratic participation, access to education, and personal well-being.

“True peace can only be achieved through peaceful means,” said Hassan El-Tayyab, FCNL's legislative director for Middle East policy. “These terrible attacks and violent response increase our resolve to protect innocent life and advocate for an end to all forms of injustice in Israel and the occupied Palestinian

territories. Policymakers in the United States must refrain from further militarizing this conflict and work to ensure that our military assistance is never used to violate Palestinian human rights. Only by addressing core systemic issues, including decades of institutionalized oppression and collective punishment of Palestinians through brutal military occupation and a 16-year Gaza blockade, will Israelis and Palestinians live in peace.”

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AFSC

On October 13, the Israeli military ordered all Palestinians to evacuate the northern part of Gaza, including Gaza city, within 24 hours. This area is home to over 1.1 million people. There is no safe place for these people to go, and no shelter for them if they do flee. The ordered expulsion of Palestinians from northern Gaza is seen as a precursor to a ground invasion of Gaza by the Israeli military. Already over 1,800 Palestinians, including more than 583 children, have been killed during Israel's attack on Gaza. If that ground invasion moves forward, thousands more will be killed.

This catastrophe can be prevented if action is taken, but time is of the essence.

Contact your representatives today and tell them to oppose a ground invasion of Gaza by Israel and to instead support a ceasefire and humanitarian access.

We are heartbroken by the escalating violence in Palestine and Israel. We send our sympathies and solidarity to all who have lost loved ones. We mourn with you and hold all experiencing violence – and everyone waiting to hear if their loved ones are safe – in the Light.

More than 900 Israelis and 700 Palestinians have been killed over three days. Bombing of Gaza continues, and Israeli troops are being moved into position for a potential ground invasion. More than a hundred Israelis have been taken hostage. The borders of Gaza have been hermetically sealed and Israel is blocking the entry of fuel, electricity, water, food, and goods into Gaza, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.

If attacks on Gaza continue and the borders remain sealed, a deepening humanitarian crisis is inevitable and thousands more will be killed.

U.S. and European governments have expressed support for Israeli military action. The U.S. is sending Israel weapons for the attacks on Gaza.

The Israeli escalation is being justified by explicitly racist rhetoric. When announcing the siege on Gaza, the Israeli Defense Minister referred to Palestinians as “animals.”

Israeli military action is not what is needed now; it will only inflict more suffering. Instead, we need leadership that demands an immediate end to all violence and seeks long-term solutions to end the injustice and inequality that led to these devastating events.

Addressing this violence at its roots requires a clear look at the situation as it has unfolded over time. AFSC began doing relief work in Gaza in 1949, and even then we spoke about the need for justice for Palestinians. Our staff have been present in Gaza throughout all the Israeli attacks over the last decades, and AFSC has long advocated for an end of the Gaza blockade. We have witnessed the destruction, death, and suffering wrought by Israel's Apartheid policies and ongoing use of military violence – all with U.S. support.

Through this experience it has become clear to us that security cannot be created by systematic oppression. Palestinians suffer from daily violence and collective punishment, while much of the world does nothing. One need not dig deeply into the history of the 75 years of occupation to find the evidence to prove that point. Look at the conditions this year:

The people in Gaza are in the sixteenth year of a crippling blockade, with little access to electricity, medical care, jobs, education, or other essentials of a decent life. Even before the Palestinian attacks and Israeli military response on October 7, during 2023 more than 250 Palestinians had been killed by the Israeli military. More than 1,100 had been forced from their homes. More than 800 attacks on Palestinians by Israeli settlers have resulted in injuries and property loss. All this persists under the watch of a far-right Israeli government who has functioned with total impunity.

This is apartheid. And it must end for lasting peace to flourish in the region.

We all deserve to live in peace, freedom, and safety. We call on the U.S. and other members of the international community to focus immediately on diplomacy to end this current crisis, to call for the honoring of UN resolutions and international humanitarian laws, to halt the flow of weapons which will further violence, and to change long-term

policies that ignore the Apartheid realities and Israeli abuses of Palestinian rights. All of this is a central part of calling for peace.

As a Quaker organization, we believe peace is more than the mere absence of war. There is no true peace without justice and history shows us that people who are oppressed will continue to find ways to resist their oppression. The human costs of continuing along the current path are far too great. The only path to lasting peace for Palestine and Israel is by uprooting occupation and apartheid.