

QUAKER PEACE AND LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

DISCUSSION PAPER: ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

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Executive Summary

The Australia Yearly Meeting Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee developed this discussion paper, which includes questions and additional resources, to encourage informed discourse about the complex and sensitive issues that surround Israel and Palestine.

Since 1948, when the State of Israel was recognized by the United Nations, the region has been marked by violence and unrest. It has also been the subject of several negotiated and tenuous periods of peace.

Broadening one's knowledge of events such as: the 1973 war, the nonviolent 'intifadas' and the internal conflict between Palestinian fractions Fatah and Hamas, and the impact of President Obama's May 2013 visit to the region leads to a greater appreciation of the many challenges that face contemporary peace efforts.

Underlying the ongoing physical conflicts and daily acts of discrimination and sabotage, is entrenched mutual and generational mistrust.

In fact, in April 2013, following six years as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Palestine, Richard Falk saw little sign of achieving the conditions for a just peace in the region, and advised that 'the two-state solution was 'presently obsolete'.

What then is Australia's role?

The Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade publicly comments on the need to uphold international law and human rights law in keeping with its membership in the United Nations and as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. Australia's voting pattern at the United Nations on the Israeli-Palestinian issue has varied to some extent over the years.

The current government, led by Tony Abbott, changed Australia's voting on four critical topics. As a result, Australia: opposed a resolution which expressed concern at illegal practices by Israel in occupied Palestine; abstained on an assertion that the Geneva Convention applied to Israel behavior in the West Bank; abstained on demanding cessation of Israeli settlement activities; and opposed demands for Israel to cease construction of the Israeli West Bank barrier.*

Recent years have seen an increased surge of activities by non-governmental organisations and campaigns such as the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, Christian Peacemaker Teams, and the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network, to list only a few.

Friends throughout the world, including Australia, are active in many such organisations, but probably none is closer to the heart of Friends than Ramallah Friends Meeting and The Friends School in Ramallah.

Since the late 1800s, Ramallah Friends Meeting and School have maintained a visible witness to the positive presence of an active faith which believes in 'that of God in everyone'.

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), as well as Quakers in Britain, the Netherlands and Canada continues to work for peaceful solutions to the issues surrounding Israel and Palestine. In 2011, the AFSC issued a statement which outlines key principles for a just and lasting peace in the region which are politically neutral and are priorities for the organization.

Closer to home, the Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee is the link between Australian Yearly Meeting and the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network. Ongoing engagement with the Network is just one way in which Australian Friends are part of the global discourse on this important issue.

It is the intention of the Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee, through this discussion paper, to raise the level of interest, among Australian Friends in particular, to the challenges of peace making in Israel and Palestine.

We encourage your Meeting to read this paper and debate the questions within your Meeting and with others. QPLC welcomes feedback on the results of your sharing and thinking.

Your discussions are critical to becoming well informed, and to then identify and support peaceful efforts in the region.

Quaker Council for European Affairs: Our approach is based on the firm belief that all people have a right to exist in peace and security. It follows that both Israelis and Palestinians must be guaranteed this right....our approach is based on a firm belief in non-violence; we do not nor will we ever condone violence on the part of anyone: individuals, groups or states.'

* This is the term preferred by the British Broadcasting Company to avoid political connotations of 'security fence' (Israeli preference) or 'apartheid wall' (preferred by the Palestinians).

#

Introduction

Many Quakers around the world have a deep concern about the ongoing strife in Israel and Palestine, and are committed to working for justice and peace for all people there. This Paper seeks to outline the history of Israel and Palestine, to identify recent trends and issues, to describe the approaches taken by Australian political parties to the conflict, and to highlight Quaker responses here and overseas (especially in the Middle East). It includes questions that are intended to encourage Friends to consider individual and corporate leadings.

Historical Context

A full description of the story of Israel and Palestine is included as an Appendix to this Paper. The following points summarise that story to give context to the issues that face the people of the region and the global community.

1. The region was an area of various empires with Jewish, Muslim and Christian dominance at different times. A formal mandate was created by the League of Nations in 1922 to allow Britain to administer the area, and this continued until 1948 when the State of Israel was recognized by the United Nations. Much turmoil followed, with refugees from different sides fleeing or being expelled.
2. Tensions led eventually to two major wars – in 1967 and 1973 between Israel and the nearby Arab states. As a result Israel acquired Gaza, the West Bank and Golan Heights, but after the Camp David Accords the Sinai was returned to Egypt. Despite numerous UN-sponsored resolutions, negotiations, monitoring and refugee support, the area has remained a source of tension.
3. The two UN Security Council resolutions still seen as central to any future peace are – resolution 242 (1967) which called for the acknowledgement of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, and resolution 338 (1973) seeking implementation of 242. Other significant resolutions have called for sanctions against Israel for failing to cease its occupation.
4. Unrest and violence have continued in various forms, including rocket attacks on Israel and military strikes by Israel. Nonviolent 'intifadas' by Palestinians have occurred several times. There has been division among Palestinians through the formation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (Fatah) and Hamas (Muslim brotherhood).
5. International peacemaking efforts have been made since 2000 by the Arab League, the Quartet (USA, EU, Russia and the UN) and separately by US presidents, all to no avail. Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005 but has maintained a blockade there in the face of continuing rocket attacks on its citizens.

Recent Developments

6. The Palestinian Authority decided to seek an upgraded status at the United Nations, and this was granted in late 2012 when the UN General Assembly passed a resolution making it a 'non-member observer state'. This was a symbolic but significant indication of support by 138 countries (there were 9 against and 41 abstentions). Since then the PA has been known officially as 'the state of Palestine'.

7. In March 2013 the US President Barack Obama visited the region and spoke with many people on all sides of the conflict. He asked the Secretary of State John Kerry to follow up this visit and get negotiations going again. In July the President met with Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in Washington and endorsed the new process of peace negotiations.

8. Conflict has continued on and off between the two main elements of the Palestinian movement - Fatah and Hamas (which has controlled the Gaza Strip). However they came together in April 2014, reflecting the changing dynamics of the region. The result, according to Alon Ben-Meir (New York University, quoted in *The World Post* on 7 May), will enable the Palestinian Authority "to present a united front, prevent Israel from continuing its policies of 'divide and conquer', deny Israel's claim that there is no partner with whom to negotiate, strengthen its mandate to govern, and gain, over time, enhanced international support".

9. The Israeli response to this move was to suspend peace negotiations, but some commentators believe Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was never very committed to them anyway and was pleased for an excuse to stop them. There is some hope that Israel will eventually move to a position of building on the Fatah-Hamas agreement by encouraging further steps towards greater recognition of Israel as part of an improvement in relations in the region.

10. The [Parliamentary Library's Blog](#) (*Flagpost*) on 12 May 2014 carried an article by Wendy Bruere that drew attention to the breakdown of the talks by highlighting the ongoing settlement activity by Israel, and the Palestinian Authority's decision to apply to join 15 international treaties in order to strengthen its status internationally. Each side saw these moves as contrary to the basis for the peace talks. A further complication has been the decision of the Israeli Prime Minister to put before the Knesset a bill to make Israel a 'Jewish' state.

Question for Discussion: *What knowledge have you about the history of the region, and where has it come from?*

Analysis and Comment

11. [Michael Ben-David](#) wrote in May 2008 that "when the state of Israel was formed (1948), hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs were evicted from their homes in the land that became Israel and never allowed to return. These people and their descendants became the Palestinian refugees of today and their

plight is the root and cause of the Israel-Palestine conflict". Eric Kaad wrote in January 2009 that the control of Jerusalem and especially the Temple Mount is basic to the conflict. "Based on the deep underpinnings that the Temple Mount has for both Islam and Judaism, the need for each to control the site is in direct relation to honouring the historical meaning of their religion". He considers that this issue must be brought out into the open before progress can be made towards ending the conflict.

12. The *Toronto Star* newspaper (Canada) published an article by Oakland Ross in 2009 that showed how powerful factions on both sides play a role in fostering a tense climate which supports an ever more entrenched cycle of hatred and violence. Quoting psychologists and scholars, the article pointed out that dehumanising opponents is a feature of such conflicts, An Israeli soldier is reported as referring to the lives of Palestinians as "something much less important than the lives of our soldiers", and conversely a journalist says that "in Friday sermons in mosques, they say we (i.e. Israelis) are descendants of pigs and monkeys". The article also draws attention to the isolation that results from very little day-to-day contact between Israelis and Palestinians, leading to stereotypical images – "the Israeli as rabid settler or rampaging soldier, the Palestinian as ruthless terrorist".

13. The website wiseGEEK also identifies the historical dispossession of the Palestinians as fundamental to the conflict. "Palestinians have used violent force during the course of the conflict in an attempt to overtake the Jews, reclaim the territory, and allow the refugees to return to their former land. Although terrorist groups are responsible for many of the attacks against Israel, most Arabs there live in poverty and poor living conditions. There have been a number of peace treaties that both sides tried to implement, but none have withstood the test of time in maintaining peace in the region. This is due, in part, to repeated terrorist attacks and continued pushes for more land by both sides".

14. Richard Falk, UN Special Rapporteur on Palestine (whose six-year term has just concluded) said in April 2013 that the 'two-state solution was "presently obsolete". "In the wake of the June 1967 war, the situation can be characterised as one in which the Palestinians have lost and the Israelis have gained". He saw little sign of achieving the conditions for a just peace. In his final report to the UN in May 2014, Richard Falk drew attention to the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion in 2004 that "the grave infringements of the rights of Palestinians caused by the wall in the occupied territories were not necessary to satisfy legitimate Israeli security requirements". He spoke of the expansion of settler colonies continuing unabated, and of Israeli moves to preserve a Jewish majority in East Jerusalem by revoking resident status and demolishing houses. The Gaza Strip remains the most oppressed area of the occupation.

15. Ami Isseroff has written an extensive history of the conflict for a website www.mideastweb.org in which the following points are made:

- It is estimated that over 1000 Israelis have died as a result of terrorist attacks, and over 3500 Palestinians as a result of retaliatory strikes and assassinations by Israel.
- Extremist Palestinian groups have continued to oppose the peace process and regard Israel as illegitimate.
- The Intifada caused many Israelis to lose faith in the possibility of peace, and Israeli reprisals embittered Palestinians further.
- Israel maintains control over most of the water resources of the region.

16. During 2013 there were two visitors to Australia who indicated their view that a one-state solution based on the equal rights of all citizens was the best aim. Dr Mona El Farra, from the Red Crescent Society for the Gaza Strip, spoke of the severe deprivation affecting especially Palestinian children, and saw the BDS campaign as part of the resistance to occupation. Professor Ilan Pappé from Exeter University (UK) said “we need to reclaim Judaism and extract it from the hands of the ‘Jewish State’ as a first step towards building a joint place for those who lived and want to live there in the future”.

17. The International Crisis Group reported in late March 2014 (“The Next Round in Gaza”) that:

- Periodic escalations of violence between Israel and Gaza militants are the rule, not the exception.
- Egypt has become more antagonistic to Hamas and Gaza as Egypt’s leaders attempt to suppress the Muslim Brotherhood.
- An uneasy equilibrium continues between Gaza and Israel – each side unable to get what it wants but not wanting to risk war.
- There may be opportunities for the peace process to move forward slowly in this environment, with the Palestinian Authority and Israel (with US encouragement) laying the groundwork for reconciliation.

Question for Discussion: *What is your own understanding of the basic causes of the Israel-Palestine conflict?*

Australia’s Role

18. Australia was prominent in moves to create the state of Israel in the early years of the United Nations. Dr H. V. Evatt as external affairs minister headed the UN Special Committee on Palestine in 1947 which came up with the Partition Plan on which the two-state approach was based.

19. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) website speaks in the following terms about Israel and Australia:

- Australia and Israel have a close relationship with significant people-to-people and commercial links.
- Israel is a robust parliamentary democracy.

- Israel is a technologically advanced market economy, with strong economic growth, foreign investment, and consumption.
- Australian forces served alongside Israelis in the region, and Australia was the first country to vote in favour of the 1947 UN partition resolution.

Agencies within Australia that actively promote links include the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce with over 1000 member companies, and the Australia-Israel Leadership Forum which encourages visits and contact between political representatives of Australia and Israel.

20. An analysis of Australia's role has been made by Eulalia Han (Griffith University) in a published article in 2010. Its assessment is that Australia has aligned itself closely with Israel despite Australia's publicly stated commitment to uphold international law and human rights norms, as a member of the United Nations. Both major political parties have generally voted with Israel at the United Nations, although the ALP did adopt more urgency in its 2004 Platform to work for a just and lasting peace based on UN resolutions. The media reporting (as shown in a study of *The Australian* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* over a ten-year period) was fair in describing the motives and aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians, but there was a strong tendency to focus more on violence and hostility than peace negotiations, and there was minimal analysis or historical context.

21. The article included a summary of public opinion drawn from a survey of 1000 citizens in 2010 and this showed the following:

- On the causes of the conflict, 37% identified ancient hostility between Jews and Arabs, 27% dispossession of Palestinians, and 27% the hostility of certain Arab nations towards Israel.
- 55% of respondents saw the conflict as about Palestinians trying to end Israel's occupation and form their own state, and 32% saw it as Israel fighting terrorism.
- Most respondents saw the negotiation process as the best way to achieve peace.
- 50% did not want Australia to get involved in peacemaking, 20% wanted it, and 30% were unsure.
- 80% wanted the Australian Government "to adopt a policy that calls for negotiations to be based on international law and human rights".
- 75% opposed Israel's settlement policy, 92% supported the right of Palestinian refugees to return, and 40% wanted Jerusalem as a shared capital.

22. Peter Manning (Crikey website) has analysed the policy changes adopted by Australia at the United Nations. Australia's voting pattern has varied to some extent in recent years. For example, the ALP government led by Kevin Rudd in 2009 switched its vote in the General Assembly by supporting (a) the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, (b) the illegality of the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territory, and (c) the applicability of the Geneva Convention to

the Occupied Territory. This reversed the previous Howard government's policy and returned to the Keating ALP government approach of the 1990s. Under Julia Gillard as PM, the ALP took a more pro-Israel position, but in 2012 the Foreign Minister Bob Carr managed to persuade the Government to abstain on the vote to upgrade the status of the Palestinian Authority.

23. The current Coalition Government, led by Tony Abbott, changed the voting arrangements again when the annual vote on Palestine was held in the UN General Assembly in November 2013. Australia supported resolutions on assisting Palestinian refugees, supporting UNRWA's work, supporting foreign aid to Palestine, and encouraging the Middle East peace process. These votes were consistent with previous voting patterns by Australia over many years. There were four other votes where the decision was changed: (a) it opposed (with seven others) a resolution expressing concern at illegal Israeli practices in occupied Palestine; (b) it abstained on a resolution asserting that the Geneva Convention applied to Israel's behavior in the occupied territory; (c) it abstained on a resolution demanding the cessation of Israeli settlement activities; and (d) it opposed (with seven others) demands for Israel to cease construction of the wall.

24. The Australian Greens leader Christine Milne presented the following motion to the Senate in late November 2013: That the Senate call on the Prime Minister Tony Abbott MP to ensure Australia in future supports UN resolutions that identify illegal Israeli settlements as a major roadblock to peace in the Middle East, and reaffirms commitment to a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. The motion was defeated.

25. The ALP in opposition has had some ambivalence about its position. In April 2014 the leader Bill Shorten, speaking to the Zionist Federation of Australia, acknowledged that some settlement activity in the West Bank is illegal under Israeli law and that Labor encourages Israeli authorities to act on this. However Tanya Plibersek, the party's shadow foreign affairs minister, responded by saying that Labor's position has not changed since it had advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade when in government that the settlements are not in line with international law.

26. The current Australian Ambassador to the United Nations, Gary Quinlan, made a statement to the UN Security Council (of which Australia is a member at present) in early 2014 on the Palestinian question. He commended the persistence of the USA in encouraging negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, commended the Israeli Prime Minister and the Palestinian Authority leader for launching negotiations in July 2013, and urged them to refrain from action or statement that might increase tension. He reiterated Australia's position that a two-state solution is in the best interests of both parties and to the benefit of the wider region.

Question for Discussion: *From your experience in reading and conversation, what is your perception of the attitudes of Australians towards the Israel-Palestine conflict?*

NGO Activities

27. The most prominent recent action by the global NGO community has been the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, which began in 2005 following a call from Palestinian organisations to the international community to apply pressure similar to what was done against South Africa under apartheid. The campaign has developed in many parts of the world, as churches, universities, councils, and some governments, have sought to remove investment and economic support from companies and agencies that profit by the settlement program in Israel-Palestine. The two major political parties in Australia have not been supportive of BDS. The NSW Greens supported it in 2011 but then decided to adopt the more reserved position of the Australian Greens focusing on a two-state solution and on supporting UN resolutions.

28. Christian Peacemaker Teams made up of people from different parts of the world have been supporting Palestine-led nonviolent grassroots resistance to the occupation. They work with local Palestinians and Israelis committed to creating a space for justice and peace. This work includes providing daily accompaniment for Palestinian children walking to and from school, accompanying shepherds and farmers to their fields, monitoring military checkpoints and roadblocks, intervening during human rights abuses and violations, and reporting to the wider world on what is going on in the region.

29. The Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) is a program of the World Council of Churches (WCC). It seeks to support local and international efforts to end the Israeli occupation and bring a resolution to the conflict with a just peace based on international law and UN resolutions. The National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) has an EAPPI desk to help select and train volunteers to take part in the Program. It aims to send four accompaniers from Australia each year to be part of the West Bank teams.

30. In Australia there is also the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN), to which Yearly Meeting is affiliated. APAN seeks to give a national voice to the Palestinian experience, with an aim of bringing balance and truth to the public debate in Australia about the Israel-Palestine conflict. The network includes churches, aid and development organisations, unions, Palestinian and Jewish groups. It meets with Members of Parliament and Government ministers, hosts public events for visiting experts from the region, and makes representations on peace and justice concerns.

31. There are many groups within Israel that are seeking to promote peace and justice. For example, the Coalition of Women for Peace, founded in 2000, brings together women from many identities and groups. It undertakes public campaigns and education, such as in support of human rights and against the siege of Gaza. The Breaking the Silence group enables veterans who have served in the Israeli military forces to expose publicly the reality of everyday life in the Occupied Territories, and the impact the conflict has on all involved. New Profile is a

movement for the demilitarization of Israeli society, and it opposes the ongoing use of military and security forces to oppress Palestinians.

32. On the educational scene, the Centre for Bilingual Education (CBE) was established in 1997 by Lee Gordon (Jew) and Amin Khalat (Palestinian) to foster co-educational bi-lingual institutions as a way to achieve cooperation between Palestinian and Jewish educators and students. There are now 5 schools catering for over 1000 students. This is a pioneering effort in a region where education is heavily focused on the Jewish culture and history. Another significant initiative is the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, started by Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said to enable musicians from all sides to play together. Daniel Barenboim said in 2009 "We aspire to total freedom and equality between Israelis and Palestinians, and it is on this basis that we come together to play music".

33. In Britain there is an organization called Jews for Justice for Palestinians, with over 1600 identified supporters. It has the following basic tenets:

- Peace will come about only with mutual recognition and respect.
- Peace requires an end to the illegal occupation and settlements.
- Israel's policies in the West Bank and Gaza are seeding hatred.
- Jews must speak out for Palestinian human rights.
- The humanitarian values of Judaism have been corrupted by Israel's human rights abuses.
- The UN resolutions on Palestine must be implemented.

34. In November 2013 a coalition of 30 feminist groups released a Comprehensive Action Plan for the Application of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security), and called on the government to include women from all sectors of Israeli society in peace negotiation teams and other policy-making bodies. A report published on the Peace Women website recalled that Israel had been the first UN member state to include parts of Resolution 1325 in national legislation in 2005, but that the law had remained largely token in its impact. The coalition aims to provide more opportunities for women to meet across the political/ethnic/religious dividing lines.

Questions for Discussion:

- *Have you felt led to become engaged with working for a peaceful outcome?*
- *What actions do you think would contribute to an effective role for Australia through (a) government policies, (b) NGO programs?*
- *Would you consider becoming involved in direct action in the region (eg through one of the existing groups working there)?*
- *Do you support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign?*

Quaker Responses

35. The Quakers have been present in the region since the late 1800s, most notably through the Ramallah Friends Meeting (whose Meeting House was built in 1910) and The Friends School (lower school began in 1895 and upper school in 1901). The Meeting has been active in the community through a children's play centre, first day school and women's activities. During the 1948 upheavals it became the home to many Palestinian refugees. There was a setback in the 1990s when the Israel-Palestine conflict caused damage to the buildings and led to emigration of many people from the area. In 2002 Friends in the US began to raise funds to renovate the buildings and grounds, and in 2005 the Meeting re-emerged as a Quaker and community resource. The school is committed to excellence in education, developing the whole person, helping each person recognise their responsibility to society, and equality. The lower school has around 650 pupils and the upper 500, with total staff of around 130.

36. Friends from different parts of the world have supported Friends in Ramallah in many ways over the years. Friends from USA, UK, Europe and other places including Australia have spent time there in various roles, including as Friends in Residence. An international centre (under the auspices of Global Ministries in USA) there has hosted many significant gatherings about current issues, and has also been the venue for cultural events that draw in many people from the local community.

37. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has had a long engagement with the region. It prepared a major report called *Search for Peace in the Middle East* in 1970, which concluded as follows: "Our basic concern is not with politics, power, or sovereignty, for these are only instruments in the search for the good life. The real tragedy of the Middle East today is that people are not enjoying the good life. For many, bodily conditions are harsh and their physical situation impoverished and unfree. Large numbers of the younger generation are wasting their precious youth in learning to kill, and in this way their bodies and minds are denied the chance to do the constructive work their communities so urgently need".

Its most recent statement of 'Principles for a just and lasting Peace between Palestinians and Israelis' (Nov. 2011) covers the following points:

- Self Determination. Israelis and Palestinians have the right to live as sovereign peoples in their own homeland. This could mean two separate states, a bi-national state, or a confederation. UN resolutions 242 and 338 provide a way forward consistent with international law. Reciprocity is an essential part.
- Rights. The usual civil/political, economic, social and cultural rights should apply. Special attention is needed to freedom of movement within borders and freedom from collective punishment.
- Economic Justice. All parties must ensure equitable access to land and water, fair taxation, and mobility for trade, education and employment.
- Governance. Both parties have the right to choose their form of governance.

- Security. There must be trust, respect, and mutual recognition of the humanity of all, and of past sufferings. Military might increases fear and exacerbates power differences. Disarmament is needed.
- Jerusalem. It must be seen as a city that can be united and shared, with open access to all.
- International Community. There is a need to reinforce negotiation between unequal parties by enforcing international agreements and laws on human rights, self-determination etc.

This statement was followed in 2012 by a decision to focus AFSC's priorities on (a) challenging the structures of violence in the region, (b) challenging (through BDS) the economic systems that sustain and profit from occupation and violence, (c) supporting new political spaces through which activists can challenge the occupation, (d) creating opportunities for sustained dialogue and networking that bring together Palestinians across geographic and political boundaries.

38. Some Quakers in Britain, the Netherlands, USA and Canada have taken steps in support of the BDS campaign, in response to a request from Ramallah Friends in 2010 that serious consideration be given to this approach as part of Friends' wider concern for the Israel-Palestine conflict. QPLC itself prepared a *Watching Brief* on this (August 2013) to assist Australian Friends in their own leadings.

39. The Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee (QPLC) has become the link between Yearly Meeting and the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN), and endeavours to follow up concerns raised through that network as well as more generally. At QPLC's suggestion, in March 2014 the YM Presiding Clerk wrote to the Australian Foreign Minister raising two matters of concern – (a) the Four Corners TV program (10 February) which showed children and young people being harassed by Israeli soldiers when protesting against settlement activity, and (b) the prevention of some Christian Peacemaker Teams from entering Palestine. The government's response is awaited.

40. Recently the Alternatives to Violence program and Friends Peace Teams have been exploring the possibilities for nonviolence workshops in Tel Aviv, Ramallah and Hebron. Joe DiGarbo (US Quaker) is seeking funding and volunteers to make this a reality. He has reported that many people in Israel-Palestine have requested such training and support.

Question for Discussion: *What steps can Australian Quakers take (individually and corporately) to achieve peace with justice in the region?*

List of Questions

1. *What knowledge have you about the history of the region, and where has it come from?*
2. *What is your own understanding of the basic causes of the Israel-Palestine conflict?*
3. *From your experience in reading and conversation, what is your perception of the attitudes of Australians towards the Israel-Palestine conflict?*
4. *Have you felt led to become engaged with working for a peaceful outcome?*
5. *What actions do you think would contribute to an effective role for Australia through (a) government policies, (b) NGO programs?*
6. *Would you consider becoming involved in direct action in the region (eg through one of the existing groups working there)?*
7. *Do you support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign?*
8. *What steps can Australian Quakers take (individually and corporately) to achieve peace with justice in the region?*

Appendix: History of the Region

1. The region now known as Israel was an area of various empires with Jewish, Christian and Muslim dominance at different times. The persecution of Jews in Europe led in the late 19th century to the emergence of the Zionist movement. Following the British conquest of Syria, the Balfour Declaration (1917) favored the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. A formal Mandate was established with the approval of the League of Nations in 1922 to enable the British to administer Palestine, and this continued until 1948. During that time there were increasing flows of people into the region, leading to tension between Jews and Arabs.

2. With the formation of the United Nations in 1945, there were extensive discussions about the future of the region. This eventually led to a UN General Assembly Resolution (181) in November 1947 dividing the former Mandate area into Jewish and Arab states from May 1948. Jerusalem was accorded a special status as an area of religious significance, and was to be administered by the UN. It was also expected that refugees would have a right of return home. Israel became a member of the United Nations in 1949.

3. In the turmoil of that time, it is estimated that over 726,000 Palestinians were expelled or fled, and it is likely that a similar number of Jews fled from Arab areas to Israel. This set the scene for ongoing trauma and dislocation.

4. The Suez crisis in 1956 after Egypt nationalized the canal and Britain invaded (with the help of France and Israel) was solved by the United Nations intervening and getting the invaders to withdraw. This added to the sense of instability and insecurity in the whole region.

5. Tensions in the region led to a major war in 1967 between Israel and neighbouring Arab states (Egypt, Jordan and Syria), and after a decisive victory Israel occupied more

land – Gaza, West Bank, Sinai, and Golan Heights. A further war in 1973 was less decisive, and led eventually to the US-sponsored Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt, under which the Sinai region was returned to Egypt.

6. A perusal of UN resolutions shows the ongoing pre-occupation of the international community with the fate of the region. Many resolutions have been passed by both the General Assembly and the Security Council about Israel and Palestine. There have been repeated calls for peace negotiations, cease-fires, self-determination, and assistance for refugees. In addition, the UN Human Rights Council has made further resolutions on the human rights concerns, mostly recording Israel's violations. The UN has been active in establishing monitoring forces, refugee support agencies (UNRWA), and political initiatives to promote peace.

7. Resolution 242 of the UN Security Council in November 1967 called for acknowledgement of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states. This is widely regarded as a 'land for peace' principle as a basis for resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. It asked Israel to withdraw from area occupied in the 1967 war. Resolution 338 in October 1973 (following the Yom Kippur War) sought a cease fire and the implementation of Resolution 242.

8. In 1975 the UN General Assembly called for sanctions on Israel until it withdrew from the territories occupied in 1967. This was followed in 1983 by a call to sever diplomatic, economic and technological ties with Israel, and in 1986 by a resolution for Israel to place its nuclear facilities under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The Security Council in 1979 urged member states not to assist Israel with the development of settlements, and in 1989 deplored the deportation of Palestinians by Israel.

9. The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) was founded in 1964 with the aim of achieving a state of Palestine. It was given observer status at the United Nations in 1974 and was recognized by many states as the true representative of the Palestinian people. Yasser Arafat was chairman from 1969 until his death in 2004, and then Mahmoud Abbas took over that role. In the meantime in 1993 the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) had been formed to govern areas of the West Bank and Gaza as a consequence of the Oslo Accords signed between Israel and the PLO that year.

10. Throughout these years there have been unrest and violence throughout the region, sometimes in the form of rocket attacks on Israel by Palestinian elements and sometimes in the form of military strikes by Israeli forces on Palestinian areas. Two periods of 'intifada' (1987 and 2005) have seen the use of mainly nonviolent methods by Palestinians to assert their rights and protest against Israeli policies and actions. Israel has built a solid wall and checkpoints across the territories it controls, leading to many practical challenges for Palestinians wishing to travel for education and work in Israel.

11. Hamas was formed in 1987 as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, and according to its founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, its aim was "to liberate Palestine from Israeli occupation and establish an Islamic state in the area that is now Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip". It was immediately regarded as a terrorist organization by the US, EU, Jordan, Egypt, Canada, and Japan, but seen differently by Russia, China, Iran and Turkey and others. Hamas has launched numerous attacks on Israeli military and civilian personnel, and has been in conflict much of the time with Fatah and the PLO.

12. US President Clinton initiated talks in 2000 at Camp David, with Ehud Barak (Israeli PM) and Yasser Arafat (PLO), but agreement was not reached despite significant offers by Israel to cede territory. A Trilateral Statement was issued affirming the aim of ending decades of conflict by continuing to negotiate on the basis of UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. It also urged restraint in any unilateral action that might prejudice negotiations.

13. In 2002 the Arab League supported a comprehensive plan proposing normalizing relations between the Arab region and Israel in exchange for complete withdrawal by Israel from the territories occupied in 1967 and a just settlement of the Palestinian refugee crisis (there are now about 350,000 refugees). Israel's response was luke-warm. In 2003 an international plan (Road Map) prepared by a Quartet (USA, the European Union, Russia and the UN) was endorsed by the UN Security Council (Resolution 1515) as a way to achieve a comprehensive and final settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by a series of phases leading to 2005. As with so many previous attempts, this too failed.

14. In 2005 Israel withdrew from Gaza. In the 2006 Palestinian Authority elections Hamas gained more seats than Fatah, and has continued to run Gaza since 2007. Direct attacks on Israel and a military response in 2008 soured the situation further, and Israel has maintained a blockade on Gaza despite numerous protests from the outside world. The people of Gaza remain very vulnerable and poor. A Flotilla of ships tried to break the blockade in 2010 without success.

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