

Draft minute on the Israel and Palestine conflict For Friends Meeting at Cambridge (version 4)

DRAFT BY SKIP SCHIEL
Nov 2, 2014

Since our founding more than 300 years ago, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) have striven to live by our Peace Testimony: to "utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fighting with outward weapons for any end or under any pretense whatsoever." We believe also that a key step towards stability and safety for both Israelis and Palestinians depends on a just agreement regarding the Palestinian lands that Israel has occupied, illegally, according to international law, since 1967. Therefore, Friends Meeting at Cambridge join in support of the Britain Yearly Meeting statement endorsed on August 8, 2014 by 2,000 Quakers which states the following:

"The hostilities in Gaza [Operation Protective Edge in July-August 2014] are the latest eruption of the deep and long-running conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Root causes of this conflict, including the structural violence of occupation, must be addressed. Such violence damages all the people of the region."

Friends Meeting at Cambridge recognizes that the latest ceasefire provides a critical opportunity for a just and lasting solution. Based on the long-standing experience of many Quakers working on this issue in Palestine, Israel, and the United States and learning from the daily lives of Quakers in Ramallah, and in accord with our peace and equality testimonies, we call on the United States, whose congress and administration have been uncritical backers of Israel, and the United Nations to take strong leadership roles by moving immediately toward:

- Support for self-determination and justice for the Palestinian people and security for the Israeli people (and Jewish people world-wide as we note the rise in anti-Semitism)
- Equal rights for all parties
- Agreement to an extension of the ceasefire by all parties, with effective negotiations toward a final settlement
- A swift timeline for an end to Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory and blockade of Gaza
- Initiation of a comprehensive arms embargo on Israel, Hamas, and armed Palestinian groups*
- Commitment to a collaborative international investment in humanitarian aid, trauma-informed mental health services, and re-construction of infrastructure for all affected communities

- “Join the non-violent action of boycotting products made in Israel’s illegal West Bank settlements and divest from companies that support and benefit from Israel’s military occupation and repression of the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank” as minuted by Madison Monthly Meeting in September, 2014

Again, in unity with British Friends, “We feel called to speak and act alongside others to address the roots of violence. We continue to uphold Quakers in the region and those working nonviolently for peace and human rights within Israel and Palestine. Quakers will continue to challenge anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, as we oppose all forms of prejudice. We long for—and will work for—a time when the deep fear experienced on all sides is replaced by security and a just peace.... We recognize that Peace-building is a long and demanding path to take, but an essential one.”

By promulgating this minute we join with a rapidly growing number of monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings around the world, as well as the American Friends Service Committee for the list. (<http://afsc.org/friends/calling-economic-action-end-israel%E2%80%99s-occupation-minutes-and-statements-quaker-meetings-organ>)

As Quakers, as citizens of the United States, as human beings seeking justice with peace and security, we cry out, not in our name—stay human.



Palestinian children with a Jewish Israeli woman in Wadi Fukin, West Bank, Palestine (photo by Skip Schiel)

Footnote:

*The Arms Export and Control Act and the Foreign Assistance Act, along with the Leahy Law (more information below) are relevant to US support of Israel. The UN’s General Assembly embargo of weapons to apartheid South Africa sets a powerful precedent.