

RESPONSES TO QUERIES POSED DURING

ISRAEL PALESTINE THRESHING SESSION #6

Introduction

At the March 22nd Threshing Session (#6), participants were asked to consider the following three queries during periods of focused worship. Responses were then shared in a worship sharing format. This process was used in response to the group's expressed desire at the March 1st meeting for more opportunities to explore divergent opinions and to share more deeply with each other, and the recommendation that writing a minute might serve as a way of doing that exploration.

The following three queries were posed as a starting point. The responses to the queries are being shared with the group to serve as one basis for facilitating future discussion(s) and sharing of firmly held perspectives and tender concerns.

(Note: See Footnote below). ¹

What are the unique Quaker perspectives, values or concerns that prompt us to write this minute?

- Violence leads to harm which usually leads to revenge, ushering in more violence. As Quakers we are open to committed dialogue with everyone, even those who have committed violence.
- Our open-ness to truth and simplicity. Government may state they are committed to a "peace process" when there is no peace process. Can point out divergence between what governments say and what their actions seem to embody. Find beautifully simple language like 'bread not bombs' (used at Draper Labs)
- Non-violence and Quakers have history of resistance and activism.
- Should we focus just on Quaker views? Many religions share views with Quakers, like Mennonites, Jewish Peace Fellowship, AFOR.
- Non-violence; willingness to reach out to individuals we believe are wrong (violence or oppression) but whose humanity we never reject. Role as peacemakers or reconcilers. We can witness to our beliefs.
- Quakers refuse to carry arms or to participate in military or any actions that require killing for any reason. We are working for reconciliation.

¹ 1. *There remains among some members of the group a dynamic tension between a sense of urgency to "do something" (e.g., preparing a minute of concern) and a belief that any document should be written only after substantially more discussion and deep sharing among the group.*
2. *Additional strategies that have been suggested for learning opportunities and facilitated dialogue are also being pursued. As these opportunities are developed they will be brought back to the group for further discussion.*

- Redemption and facilitating redemption: on both sides and in U.S.: policies should foster redemption
- "Speaking truth to power" and "that of God in every person"
- Religious Society of Friends has had projects and prayerful relations (active work and prayer) for over 160 years. Quakers refuse to carry arms as God requires that we not kill for any reason.
- Facilitate the stopping of violence, racism, and oppression from both sides and to facilitate growth of love and redemption from both sides.
- Militarism is annihilation. It is not only homicidal, it is suicidal. There is no way to peace. Peace is the way. The U.S. should not support militarism here or in Israel Palestine.
- The Divine call to engage with all peoples and nations involved in the Israel Palestine conflict to be channels of reconciliation and healing. OR: As a people of faith with a long history of peacemaking, we are compelled to engage with all peoples and nations involved in the Israel Palestine conflict to be channels of reconciliation and healing.
- Violence leads to harm and the desire for revenge and more violence. Quakers are open to dialoging with those who have committed violence. Truth and simplicity (or transparency) are often in contradiction with stated government goals and media descriptions of events, as for example last summer's Gaza conflict. Even the use of phrases such as "the peace process" or "the war of Israel and Palestine" giving the impression of two massed armies fighting each other. At Draper labs in Cambridge where the guidance systems for super accurate nuclear missiles were designed, we in Ailanthus used to hold a sign which simply said "Bread not Bombs"

What is/are specific concern(s) that you want to convey about U.S. involvement?

- Projects and prayerful relations for 160 years in Israel-Palestinian region. We want to address U.S. and our actions and change its current position.
- Questions about interaction of non-violence with U.S.'s role as it relates to specifics. \$3 billion of U.S. to Israel matched by something like \$2 billion to Egypt. Cost of Yom Kippur War in 1973 was historically expensive; structured so Israel would not have to fear again. A lot of spending dictated by Senate treaty from Camp David. A lot of this aid is military aid and a lot of this is for Iron Dome. It is shooting missiles out of sky and is fundamentally defense. Is this violence or non-violence? Spending with Palestinians that finds its way to be used for military purposes through corruption even if not specifically intended or designated for that.
- U.S. doesn't pay its fair share of UN dues to enable them to build a strong peacebuilding force in that region.
- How do we train people in negotiation and reconciling behaviors, and not jU.S.t shut out those with whom we disagree?
- Our country is deeply involved in arms-building, arms-supplying with very invisible role in peacebuilding and reconciliation. Some good words are said, but actions and investments on ground don't reflect them. U.S. government has largely taken one side in the conflict. Low confidence in U.S. as peace builder in the region because of this. Historically we have facilitated the conflict and acquiesced in occupation even if we state we oppose it.

- U.S. is seen by so many as one of the most powerful countries in the world, but it rests on military power and murder. But we have the spiritual and human resources to become true peace builders. As long as we hold a grievance against anyone (e.g., Boehner, Netanyahu), we are hiding the Light. How do we get to the place of forgiveness? We have to do the work of continuing to stay open and not making judgments.
- Hold grievance against the actions of individuals, but not the soul of individuals. We need to better understand the views of those with whom we disagree.
- With its support for secure Israel at expense of oppressed Palestine, U.S. foreign policy feeds violence in region but also undermines and diminishes our moral values as a people.
- Are we holding Israel and Palestine equally in God's light? Caught in a spiritual vortex.
- How U.S. policy hobbles us is not about picking sides, it is universal. We are all complicit. We are shooting ourselves in the foot.
- U.S. policy doesn't come from a place of seeing that of God in all people in Israel-Palestine.
- Must start from Quaker values and evaluate any actions U.S. is considering and see what Quaker values have to say about this and come up with a counter proposal. We don't have to spell out our values, but explore where other people's commitments and values come from and what variants are possible? If decision is in the hands of those with power and committed to violence, how can pacifists have power? Find potential allies and certainly we will not succeed if we don't try.
- Build on contributions Quakers have made in region. Work done in the region in 1948, before UNRAH established and dealing with refugees from Nazi Germany. Left deep mark on people and that region. Quakers brought not just high values but human-to-human interactions. Brought back in in 1967 and Quakers invited in after Gaza war to work with refugees. Leaders knew of Quakers' pacifism and work with conflicting parties. We should build on prior contributions to compassionate peace in that region.
- Active debate in Jewish religion U.S. world about whether appropriate to bear arms and more orthodox refuse to serve in army and believe only path is to pray. In 200 years of pogroms, could count on one hand the times Jews responded in violence.
- The map of Palestine showing current settlements speaks to an immense imbalance of power, and an overwhelming obstacle to an acceptable solution.
- Friends have been concerned that the U.S. is selling military equipment that is contributing to the killing and the destruction of arable habitat. Our U.S. actions say that we are offering military or violent solutions. We are concerned that unflagging negotiation, and continued listening to all political groups, and persistent pursuit of goals that help Palestinians and Israelis is possible.
- In its support for a secure Israel at the expense of an oppressed Palestine, U.S. foreign policy, not only continues to feed the violence in the region, but it spiritually undermines our ideals as American people. It is not consistent with our Quaker experience of seeking that of God in all people.
- Our government posture encourages the increase of occupation and repression of Palestine by Israel, and our money and equipment makes it possible. The IDF is not merely a defensive organization but also an army of occupation and we supply and support them. Our stated policy is a two state solution, but over the years we have continued to support the government of Israel as that solution disappears through the taking of land from the Palestinians and the growth of Israeli settlements.

What actions do we request of the U.S. government?

- PSCC starting conversation on what peace testimony means to U.S. today at FMC
- U.S. should join with UN Security Council, and draft Israeli-Palestinian peace proposal. And lean heavily and urge Israel to fully engage with Palestine, in context of Arab Peace Initiative (57 countries) around the borders of 1967 war and which includes recognition of Israel.
- U.S. should withdraw military supplies from Israel, in context of conflict that now exists.
- Recognize state of Palestine
- Rebuild Gaza or contribute money to do this and help rebuild UN facilities/schools there
- Palestinians and Israelis have to take top 5 leaders into a room together and spend 60 days together and have to come out with peace. ["Do not stop communicating with those with whom we disagree."]
- U.S. should join Criminal Court of the Hague
- Are we asking U.S. representatives to talk with those with whom they disagree? Should part of those discussions be around settlement?
- Have conversation about honoring all people that live in the Middle East?
- Homeland: U.S. itself has stolen land from Native Americans. Can we speak from integrity if we or our ancestors have done this?
- The U.S. needs to remove all military assistance and offer aid and expectation that an agreement of how to govern the occupied territories can be met. We desire truth and simplicity of events. We reject occupation of one party over another. We look for reconcilers.
- Continue the two state solution; Continue support against further development of settlements; Stop military aid; stop funding armaments that kill people; use money we give for reconciliation and redemption.
- Consistently support an end to settlements – just a first step to a resolution of the issues.
- "Bread Not Bombs": Stop sending money for military supplies to the region. Recognize Palestine as a state.
- Support any action that confronts Israeli settlements and works to reverse its effects. Support the Palestinian authority at the UN. Reduce the arms supply and impose conditions on their use by the IDF. Rebuild Gaza. Support the UN rebuilding of their refugee network in Gaza. Train and support people for an office of reconciliation/mediation with a focus on Israel/Palestine. Join the ICC.