

Salem Friends Meeting Minute on Palestine-Israel Conflict

6/23/24

As a Meeting we hold a variety of views and opinions on the current siege on Gaza, but as Quakers we are called to make a statement. Quakers approach conflicts through discernment and living into the question, and we also oppose mass killing and violence. This conflict is not something which we can wait to address; this is a present and dire moment that requires response. Given the military escalation, the mass student movements and violent government responses in the United States and other countries, this is such a moment. This does not negate the questions and concerns that we continue to discuss as a Meeting and that will be answered in the months and years of this violence, but our questions cannot delay us from speaking out firmly against human rights abuses and systematic violence in both Gaza and the Occupied West Bank. The systematic bombing of blockaded populations and civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and schools, the holding of hostages, the lack of aid entering Gaza, increasing settler violence and Palestinian displacement in the Occupied West Bank are all of major concern to this Meeting as forms of violence that are antithetical to our values and testimonies as a community. Antisemitism and Islamophobia are on the rise in the United States and globally; this is also of great concern and requires a response. Larger questions about the right to existence as an independent state, self-governance and autonomy are also worthy of discussion, but we recognize as a Meeting that we will not be the ones to answer these questions, and that they should not prevent us from upholding our value that the light of God exists within everyone. Quakers have historically eschewed political alignment in favor of providing support and aid where it is most needed. The questions above do not negate our choice and our calling as Quakers to acknowledge the humanity of all, nor would the assigned political validity of any entity. This leaves us with difficult questions to live into, but this is where our discernment and consensus processes will serve us well.

As Quakers, but also as residents of this country, our concern for how our tax dollars are spent and the military actions that have been committed in our name is of long-standing interest. Quakers have also historically spoken out against and demonstrated against U.S. support for military action by other nations as well as U.S. military action. The U.S. and Israel have a mutually beneficial military and geopolitical relationship. Do we as Quakers have the ability and or right to call to account those that benefit from our taxes and from their relationship with the government that supports them in our name (contrary to our actual desires)? The current student protests are in part because our government refuses to hold a military and political ally accountable. Students are being arrested and violently detained for being, in simple terms, anti-war protestors. Protesting war and injustices are both our history as Quakers and our present calling. We in Salem Friends Meeting are committed to work toward equality, peace, and justice. If we as Quakers are in fact anti-war and anti-violence then we cannot remain silent. As Salem Friends Meeting, we are concerned with the inner light, with peace, equality, and justice for all beings; what is happening currently is against the testimonies and overarching beliefs that hold us together in community.

