

Minute regarding the Violence in Israel, Gaza, the West Bank and the region, approved by Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, Fifth Month, 19th, 2024

We, the members of the Richmond (VA) Friends Meeting are heartbroken and stricken with horror and grief at the recent renewed eruption of violence in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank. We call for an immediate ceasefire by both Israel and Hamas, the prompt release by Hamas of all hostages, and the release of all uncharged prisoners by Israel. We call on the U.S. to urge Israel to expedite the flow of humanitarian aid to relieve the tremendous suffering that has been created in Gaza with the immediate provision of food, shelter, water, and medicine. We strongly urge the United States to no longer provide Israel with weapons or funding for weapons.

As Quakers, we believe that each life is sacred, and we know that the use of violence as a means of settling conflict is unacceptable and leads to further violence, which we see happening around the region.

We strongly condemn Hamas' horrific deadly October attacks on Israeli civilians, the inhumane treatment of civilians, and the taking of hostages, many of whom are still being held and are in danger. We also condemn the ongoing unrestrained and violent response by Israel in its siege of Gaza, which has left tens of thousands of civilians, including elderly, women, and children, dead or wounded and caused a humanitarian crisis in Gaza. People are suffering, dying, and being displaced in Gaza as a preventable humanitarian crisis worsens. Also, Palestinians in the occupied West Bank are increasingly endangered by escalated violence by settlers and the military.

We hold in our hearts and in the Light all those in Israel, Gaza, the West Bank and beyond, who grieve and mourn the deaths of their family and friends. We hold in the Light those who await the return of their loved ones who are being held by Hamas or who are held in Israeli prison without charges or trial. This ongoing violence continues to rip the hearts of those who grieve and leads to fear and hatred of the "other." We condemn Antisemitism and Islamophobia and their accompanying rhetoric which dehumanizes the "other."

We further call for Israelis and Palestinians from Gaza and the occupied West Bank to undertake a meaningful dialogue, with the support of international powers including the US. All must use every available resource to support a diplomatic rather than military resolution to the conflict - a resolution that prioritizes safety for all Israelis and Palestinians and which accords equal human rights to the Palestinians and respect for all.

We ask that Friends hold in the Light this urgent concern for peace and, if you are so led, to join us in calling for what we have set forth in this Minute.*

*Thank you to Virginia Beach Monthly Meeting for the template used for this Minute.