

Call for an immediate ceasefire and a just and stable peace in Israel and Palestine.

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in the Netherlands is shocked and deeply saddened by the enormous escalation of violence in Israel and Palestine. Behind the rapidly rising numbers of deaths and victims, especially in Gaza, lie individual lives that have been irrevocably ended or changed. We mourn the many lives already lost and call for an immediate end to all violence.


Random attacks on civilians cannot be justified. They violate international humanitarian law, which aims to limit the damage of war and protect innocent civilians. We condemn Hamas' attacks on Israeli civilians and the hostage-taking. We also condemn the Israeli state's continued violent actions in Gaza, including airstrikes on areas with large civilian populations, and the cutoff of water, electricity and access to humanitarian aid.

The cycles of violence must also be understood in the context of the threat that Israel feels from neighbouring countries and radical groups of Palestinians, on the one hand, and of Israel's military occupation of Palestine, with the blockade of Gaza and the violence in the West Bank by Israeli settlers, on the other hand with support from the Israeli army.

As Quakers, we believe that the people who are now taking the lives of other people, causing injuries, traumatization, and displacement, also have 'that of God' within them. We hope that negotiators will succeed in addressing this.

It is time for everyone – including the international community – to recognize that no military solution will permanently end the violence. Only a just peace, based on mutual respect and understanding and international law, can achieve this. We pray that all countries supplying arms to the parties in the conflict to stop arms supplies, as this will further escalate the conflict. We are actively investigating how we can urge the Dutch government and international leaders to guarantee humanitarian access for the people in Gaza. We pray for an immediate ceasefire and the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners to prevent further loss of life and suffering for Israelis and Palestinians.

We want to express our support for the cry for help from the Palestinian Christians and, together with them, the call from all Palestinians and Israelis who are for peace and for a ceasefire. Let us pray for peace and reconciliation. Let us celebrate all those who pave the way for lasting peace.



Yours sincerely

On behalf of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in the Netherlands

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Explanation:

Some moments in the history of this conflict.

The Holocaust, the murder of six million Jewish citizens in Europe during the Second World War. The need for a safe place for Jewish people from Europe and elsewhere in the world. The establishment of the State of Israel between 1947 and 1949. This was accompanied by the death of thousands of Palestinians and the expulsion of more than 750,000 Palestinians from their homes and land, this is called the Nakba by the Palestinians. A large number of Palestinian refugees have fled to Gaza and are staying there in refugee camps (houses built very close together) managed by the UN. These include Rafah, Jabâliyah, Khan Yûnis, Nuseirat and Bureij refugee camps with an estimated one and a half million residents.

The State of Israel was attacked and threatened several times by neighbouring countries, but Israel was able to prevail militarily each time.

In the West-Bank in recent decades, an average of about 200 Palestinians have been killed each year by Israeli settlers and the Israeli army and about 20 Israelis by Palestinians. In addition, there are many wounded and prisoners, especially on the Palestinian side. The past year has seen record levels of attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinian communities in the West Bank, and a sharp increase in human rights abuses. This includes the demolition of Palestinian houses and schools, the felling of olive trees, the killing of sheep and the suppression of non-violent protests and mass arrests.

The fear, sadness and anger on both sides are terribly great.

Sources:

Call from Palestinian Christians in the Netherlands to church leaders and Christians in the Netherlands

Statement from CPT (Community Peacemaker Teams Netherlands)

Open letter from the Council of Churches in the Netherlands to commit itself to Palestinian Christians

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/support-a-bilateral-ceasefire-in-gaza-and-israel-quakers-and-others-tell-world-governments>

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2023/3-november/news/world/christian-leaders-add-their-voices-to-the-call-for-a-ceasefire-in-gaza>

<https://apnews.com/article/muslims-friday-prayers-israel-palestinians-2d096a9fe2bedbc5750520242dc63598>

<https://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/resource/ceasefire/>

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/rabbis-cease-fire-capitol>

<https://afsc.org/newsroom/whats-happening-gaza-and-west-bank-dec-7-2023>

<https://www.fcnl.org/meeting-minute> (with minutes from Quaker groups in the U.S.)

<https://quakers-in-ireland.ie/2023/10/13/statement-on-tragedy-in-israel-and-palestine/>

Declaration of the Swedish Quakers on the Palestine-Israel conflict

Statement by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.