

Mt. Toby Friends Meeting's Call for an Immediate Ceasefire in Gaza
(final edited version as described in April 2024 minutes)

As Friends (Quakers), we respect the humanity of all people, which is why we have sought non-violent responses to conflict anywhere. Our experience teaches us that violence only creates hatred, fear, hopelessness, and endless new cycles of war and terrorism. Our faith teaches us to seek peaceful and non-violent solutions to conflicts of all kinds.

We were horrified by the violence of the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7th, but we have also been horrified by the enormous escalation of violence that has occurred since the Israeli armed forces invaded Gaza on October 27. Since Israel started its counterattack, close to 34,000 Gazans have died as of mid-April 2024, with around one-third of those being children. UNICEF has stated that Gaza is currently the most dangerous place in the world to be a child. Israel has placed severe limits on the number of aid trucks allowed into Gaza, so that famine conditions now exist there. Sanitary conditions are abominable, with clean water almost impossible to find. Hospitals have been attacked and rendered non-functional. Many civilians are unable to find any shelter, as much of Gaza has been reduced to rubble. Doctors, journalists, and healthcare and humanitarian aid workers have described the conditions and level of violence in Gaza as having an “unprecedented” impact on its civilian population.

It has been heart-breaking to witness the level of destruction and suffering created by the invasion. The fact that our own US bombs, tanks, guns, and tax dollars are carrying out this violence against the civilian population of Gaza makes this also our war, not just Israel's, and hence one that we must help stop.

We, therefore, call for:

- a complete cessation of violence, including the bombardment and land invasion of Gaza by the Israeli Defense Force
- an end to blockades by Israel against humanitarian assistance, the reinstatement of funding for UNRWA, and a worldwide effort to provide life-saving, humanitarian aid for those in Gaza
- the return of hostages and political prisoners from both sides of the conflict
- guarantees for the safety and security of all the people in Gaza, Israel, and the West Bank.

We ask our President and elected representatives to do all they can to bring about a permanent ceasefire and to take practical steps to ensure that U.S. tax dollars and weapons will no longer be used to support this or any other war directed against civilian populations.

The above steps will only bring an end to the immediate destruction and suffering. Important as this is, unless we also act to remove the causes of the existing fear and hatred on both sides, the cycle of violence will return, perhaps in even more extreme form. It is therefore essential that a cease fire be followed by comprehensive negotiations addressing the entirety of the Israel-Palestine conflict, led by the UN or other impartial body, to achieve a lasting solution on the grassroots level that affirms the dignity, empowerment, and safety of all those living in Gaza, Israel, and the West Bank.