



Quaker Peace & Legislation Committee

Action Alert 24-1: Palestine

As Quakers we seek a world without war. We seek a sustainable and just community. We have a vision of an Australia that upholds human rights and builds peace internationally, with particular focus on our region. In our approach to government we will promote the importance of dialogue, of listening and of seeking that of God in every person. We aim to work for justice and to take away the occasion for war.

Quakers and Palestine & Israel

The situation in Palestine and Israel has been of ongoing concern to Quakers in Australia, and many Friends are deeply distressed about the genocide currently occurring in Gaza. Since October 2023 at least 40,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israel's military assaults and blockade, with a [recent article in the Lancet](#) saying there could be as many as 186,000 people killed.

Quakers Australia have spoken out against Israel's military attacks and restrictions of aid to Gaza, and many individual Friends are attending events supporting Palestinian rights.

At the 2024 Yearly Meeting, almost forty Friends attended a Share and Tell session about Palestine and Israel, and a subsequent session at Yearly Meeting formed a network regarding this concern (to join network email aletia.dundas@gmail.com). In this worship sharing session people acknowledged the deep collective traumas felt by many, the complexities of the dynamics of oppression and violence, and the commitment to be impartial to all people while standing up against injustice. Friends encouraged one another to be compassionate while also courageous in showing solidarity with Palestinians experiencing such grievous harms.

During Yearly Meeting it was agreed to send an Epistle of encouragement to Friends in Ramallah (in Palestine) as well as a financial contribution if needed to the Ramallah Friends School. A [statement passed at Yearly Meeting](#) about a number of key concerns of Friends included the following sentiments about Palestine and Israel:

Quakers grieve deeply the decades-long injustices inflicted on Palestinians by the policies of the State of Israel. Our hearts are breaking for the extreme suffering and loss of life currently being experienced in Gaza, inflicted by the Israeli military. We acknowledge that people in Palestine and Israel are currently living in extreme fear, intensifying historical collective traumas felt by many.

We affirm that of God in all people, whether victims or perpetrators of violence, and seek justice, freedom and peace for all. We note the courage of Palestinians advocating for their freedom; and Israeli conscientious objectors and solidarity campaigners supporting this goal. We commit ourselves not just to speaking up for Palestinian self-determination, but to creative and courageous action to challenge our Government's complicity and to stand with all those suffering.

Quakers affirm our call for an immediate ceasefire, as well as the release of all hostages – both those kidnapped by Hamas; and Palestinians held by Israel without charge. These actions would be the first steps on a path towards justice and self-determination for Palestinians.

To prevent further loss of life, we urge the Australian government to take further steps, including

- recalling the Australian Ambassador to Israel for talks with the Australian Government,
- placing travel restrictions on Israeli Government officials involved in war making,

- Ending all military ties with Israel, including any direct arms sales, or components for military equipment that is imported to Israel. It also includes divesting the Future Fund from any Israeli arms manufacturers (noting it currently has investments in Elbit).

International Court of Justice Ruling

The following is extracts of an alert sent out by the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN) last week. Quakers Australia is a member of APAN.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has just ruled ([click here to download PDF of ruling](#)) that Israel's 57-year-old occupation of Palestinian territories and its building of settlements are illegal under international law. Even more groundbreaking, the ICJ has officially recognised Israel's actions as apartheid and racial segregation.

Key aspects of the ruling:

- Israel's annexation of significant portions of the Occupied Palestinian Territory violates Palestinian rights to land, water, and self-determination.
- The ICJ demands removal of settlers from illegal settlements, the dismantling of these settlements and the return of Palestinians to their properties, with reparations for those who have suffered losses.
- Israel must end its occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories as rapidly as possible.
- That Israel is in breach of Article 3 of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of racial discrimination.
- All states, including Australia, have a legal responsibility to refrain from economic or trade dealings that could support Israel's unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

In line with APAN's email, Quakers Australia has sent a letter to every Federal Parliamentarian (copy at end of this brief).

Actions for Friends to consider

1. Learn more. Useful materials have been developed by [American Friends Service Committee](#) (who work in Israel as well as Gaza) as well as the US based [Friends Committee on National Legislation](#). You can learn about Palestinian Quakers through the [Ramallah Friends website](#); or Jean Zaru's book "Occupied with Nonviolence: A Palestinian Woman Speaks" is in Quaker libraries.
2. Send an email to your local federal parliamentarian about the International Court of Justice decision, reinforcing the letter Quakers Australia sent last week.
3. Show up visibly as Quakers to existing local protests and vigils. Take Quaker banners. Wear Quaker vests.
4. Connect with your [local Palestine solidarity group](#)
5. Connect with [Palestine Israel Ecumenical Network](#)
6. Practical support:
 - Supporting Gazan refugees: Gazans are arriving in Australia are on Visas that require them to be self-supporting. Palestinian community groups are seeking: financial support; homes for families; household goods; professional services;

volunteers to support resettlement. Contact [Palestine Australia Relief and Action](#) or [Palestinian Christians in Australia](#) to offer support.

- Donate to [EAPPI Australia](#) (Act for Peace)
- Donate to the [American Friends Service Committee](#) work with Israelis and Palestinians.

Hyperlinks from above

- [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(24\)01169-3/](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(24)01169-3/)
- <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/news-events/news/public-statements-and-letters-concern>
- <https://apan.org.au/wp-content/plugins/civicrm/civicrm/extern/url.php?u=27929&qid=8388219>
- <https://afsc.org/topics/gaza-israel>
- <https://www.fcni.org/issues/middle-east-iran>
- <https://www.rfmq.org/about-us>
- <https://apan.org.au/local-groups/>
- <https://pien.org.au>
- <https://para.org.au/give-support/>
- <https://palestinianchristians.org.au/>
- <https://actforpeace.org.au/give-to-eappi/>



26 July 2024

Dear federal representatives

Palestine, Israel and the International Court of Justice

At our recent national gathering Quakers expressed grief at both the decades-long injustices suffered by Palestinians and the current loss of life in Gaza being inflicted by the Israeli military. We acknowledged that people in Israel as well as Palestine are living in extreme fear, intensifying historical collective traumas. We affirmed our call for an immediate ceasefire, as well as the release of all hostages.

To prevent further loss of life, we believe that the Australian Government should

- (a) recall the Australian Ambassador to Israel for talks,**
- (b) place travel restrictions on Israeli Government officials involved in warmaking, and**
- (c) end all military ties with Israel, including any direct arms sales or exports of weapons or weapons parts, and divest the Future Fund from Israeli arms manufacturers such as Elbit.**

We also write about the 19 July 2024 decision of the International Court of Justice about Israel's settlements. We welcome the Australian Government's careful consideration of the ICJ's decision, and the statement of respect of the Court. We are pleased that the Government has subsequently sanctioned Israeli citizens and a group complicit in settler violence as a first step of the Government's response.

The scope of the International Court of Justice's decision however is well beyond individual acts of violence by settlers. The Court states that the entirety of Israel's settlements constitutes annexation of Palestinian land, violating Palestinian rights to self-determination. Australia should also affirm the calls of the Court for Israel to dismantle the settlements, end its Occupation of Palestinian lands and its policies that are in breach of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Most importantly the Court's ruling places a legal obligation on Australia to **stop all trade in goods from illegal settlements and halt tax deductibility for Australian organisations supporting these illegal settlements.**

As an elected representative in our Parliament, we ask you to do all in your power to bring Australia's policies in line with these rulings by the International Court of Justice, as well as the International Criminal Court, so Palestinian people can have their rights to life and self-determination respected.

In peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Henry".

Bruce Henry
Presiding Clerk
The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia