

**Minute on Conflict in Israel and Gaza,
approved by Santa Cruz Friends Meeting August 11, 2024
(revised from the minute approved July 14, 2024)**

“We utterly deny all outward wars, and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretense whatsoever, and this is our testimony to the whole world.... The spirit of Christ which leads us into all Truth will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for kingdoms of this world.” ~ George Fox, in a Declaration to Charles II, 1660

As Quakers, we believe there is that of God in everyone. We deplore all acts of violence and aggression, both abroad and in our home communities. We understand that all peoples have a need and right to live in peace and security. We grieve and condemn the acts of violence against Israelis on October 7 and also against Palestinian people.

As a Meeting, we have participated in worship sharing sessions examining our grief over the ongoing conflict, and we have engaged with two speakers, Stephen Zunes and Rabbi Paula Marcus, to learn more about this issue. These small steps have contributed to our knowledge, challenged our beliefs, and asked us to listen deeply to each other.

In spite of the complicated and violent history, peacemakers in the Holy Land continue to reach across divides to bravely and creatively envision a different future. We support the efforts of those in Israel/Palestine to find new ways forward, and we commend those who contribute to peace from abroad. The voices that must be heard most urgently are those of the people who are living (and have lived) through so much violence.

As citizens of the United States, we seek to change the course of our political and military involvement in the region in order to support peaceful and long-lasting solutions to this crisis, especially those solutions emerging from the non-violent actors involved in this crisis. We recognize, as tax-paying citizens, that our tax dollars have contributed to, and continue to contribute to, the ongoing armed conflict in Gaza. This tension is difficult to ignore and has been eloquently stated by British Quaker Eva Pinthus in 1987:

“The duty of the Society of Friends is to be the voice of the oppressed but [also] to be conscious that we ourselves are part of that oppression. Uncomfortably we stand with one foot in the kingdom of this world and with the other in the Eternal Kingdom.”

We also look to the words of John Woolman, who said, “May we look upon our treasures, the furniture of our houses, and our garments, and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions.”

As members and attenders of the Santa Cruz Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, we pledge to continue our efforts to understand the needs of Israelis and Palestinians as they evolve, and to take action at home that would enhance their peaceful resolution of conflicts. We pledge to continue our involvement in this issue by engaging with our representatives locally and through Friends’ organizations.

In the midst of this time of conflict, it is crucial that we remember the possibility of the presence of kindness and love as it exists in all humanity. We hold tenderly the possibility for peace which our Quaker forebears have passed down to us, and we have hope even in these painful circumstances.