



Canadian Friends
Service Committee
(QUAKERS)

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Canadian Yearly Meeting (Quakers) Policy Statement on Advocacy for Peace in Israel and Palestine

Background:

After a long history of supporting non-violent peace initiatives, participating in dialogues, sending letters to government, and making representations to diplomats, Canadian Friends (Quakers) felt the need to pool their information and experience to set a common basis for their advocacy efforts for peace in Israel and Palestine. Canadian Friends undertake advocacy as individuals, as Monthly Meetings, through Canadian Friends Service Committee (the peace and service arm of Friends in Canada) and through Canadian Yearly Meeting (the national church body). The Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM) policy statement on advocacy for peace in Israel and Palestine provides guidance for all these levels of action.

The statement was developed through a year-long process lead by a program committee within Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC) in response to a minute approved by CYM in 2008. The process began with a draft prepared by an appointed working group which was slightly revised within CFSC before being distributed for consideration to all Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups (congregations). Many individual Quakers and Meetings responded with comments and recommended text developed through worshipful consideration. This feedback was gathered together at Canadian Yearly Meeting's annual sessions in August 2009 and, after several revisions were considered, a final statement was approved.

Canadian Yearly Meeting Policy Statement on Israel and Palestine

(from minute 78, Canadian Yearly Meeting 2009)

We are moved by the sufferings of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. This suffering has gone on too long and must not be allowed to continue. We are aware that Israel was born out of horrific violence perpetrated on the Jews - however, the Palestinians were not the perpetrators. We know that both Israelis and Palestinians have committed acts of violence against each other. We are also aware of the huge inequality of power between them.

As a people of faith, we challenge all people, and particularly people of faith, not to put their trust in tanks or bombs or military aggression, but to open themselves to the Spirit of Love which counsels a path of nonviolence. Such a path recognizes the dignity of all peoples and seeks solutions to international conflicts through just and peaceful means.

As Quakers, we reject the use of military force and violence by state or non-state actors. We believe that strategies of nonviolence are the only ethically sound, and ultimately more successful, strategies for overcoming oppression. Our experience with nonviolence has shown that there is a place both for acts of resistance and for the provision of a safe space for individuals of opposing views to dialogue. There have been many dialogue activities, and further opportunities for such work may open up. However, Palestinian nonviolent activists and their Israeli allies agree that the current need is for strong acts of nonviolent resistance and international advocacy.

There are grassroots groups, both Palestinian and Israeli, who use nonviolent action to resist the occupation, even though such actions, of which there are many, are often met by Israel with violence, even lethal violence. These nonviolent actions are not widely reported in the media. For several years, Canadian Friends Service Committee has worked successfully with the Palestinian Center for Rapprochement Between People (PCR), a grassroots organization teaching, promoting and practicing active nonviolence. We are heartened by this very significant work by our Palestinian partner, and other Palestinian initiatives, and by joint Israeli-Palestinian groups such as Bereaved Parents and Combatants for Peace.

We will continue to work with individuals and groups who are committed to nonviolence. We are heartened by the voices of dissent that have been arising from the Israeli military - young men and women who have been sickened by the ongoing suffering of the Palestinian people and have refused to participate in the military occupation of Gaza and the West Bank. We are also heartened by the networks of Jews, in Canada and elsewhere, who have the courage to dissent against the illegal actions of the Israeli state. We will work with dissenting Jewish groups (such as Jewish Voice for Peace and Independent Jewish Voices) to mobilize, in a spirit of fairness and nonviolence, for a just peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. Canadian Yearly Meeting will continue to have a relationship with the mainstream Canadian Jewish community through our ecumenical affiliation with the Canadian Council of Churches and will continue to dialogue with them as we are able, speaking truth in love.

There are a number of actions that Canadian Quakers can take in response to the issues around Israel/Palestine.

- We encourage Canadian Quakers to educate themselves about the history and current realities of the Palestine/Israel situation.
- We encourage Canadian Quakers to support the Palestinian economy by buying products such as Palestinian olive oil.
- We encourage Canadian Quakers to work with networks of Quakers and others to insist that the Canadian government act in a more progressive, peace-oriented way toward the Middle East.
- Those who feel led may also choose to get involved with groups such as Christian Peacemaker Teams, the International Solidarity Movement, and the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Accompaniment Program, and travel to occupied Palestine to bear

direct nonviolent witness to the impact of the military occupation. Where possible, visiting Israeli communities affected by the conflict is also encouraged.

Urgently, at this moment, we encourage Friends to take part in nonviolent campaigns to end the continuing blockade of Gaza and to end evictions of Palestinians from their homes. Concerned Friends who have visited the region are also drawing our attention to the unjust distribution of scarce resources, in particular, water.

We call on the State of Israel to end the blockade of Gaza, and to end the occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338. We call on the State of Israel and the Palestinians to end assaults against civilians.

We call on the Israeli government and any future state of Palestine to respect each other's right to exist within safe, secure, and defined borders, and to grant equal rights, protections, privileges and responsibilities to all of their respective citizens.

We ask CFSC to encourage our participation in the above actions, and to continue to provide educational opportunities and materials for Friends, including inviting external speakers to CYM in coming years.

Founded in 1931, [Canadian Friends Service Committee \(CFSC\)](#) acts on the peace and social justice concerns of the [Religious Society of Friends \(Quakers\)](#) in Canada. The outward expression of Quakerism is service. We are guided by a vision of a world in which peace and justice prevail, where the causes of war and oppression are removed, a world in which the whole of Creation is treated with respect and where individuals and communities are freed to reach their fullest potential.

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