



QUAKERS

Canadian Friends
Service Committee

“Let us then try what love will do: for if men [sic] did once see we love them, we should soon find they would not harm us.” –William Penn

Toolkit for Responding to Violent Conflicts



Guiding Principles

This guide has been developed by Canadian Friends Service Committee and is informed by our understanding of the Quaker peace testimony as a call to radical nonviolence, the danger of hatred, the responsibility of each individual, and the belief that peace is always possible.

Introduction

This resource is intended as a guide for Friends (and those who value peace) who are looking for ways to respond to wars, violence, and escalating global conflicts with compassion, nonviolence, and advocacy.

The resource is arranged to take you through clear and contemplative steps, leading then to meaningful action. As Quakers, we believe our action is more effective when we slow down a little and ensure we've taken the time to listen and learn more about the conflict in front of us.

“Friends’ belief that there is that of God in every person is extremely plain but extremely difficult. Once you truly believe that there is that of God in every person, can you starve God? Can you shoot God? Can you let God in a person suffer because you choose to look the other way? It is simple but very difficult. I think that is why there are so few Quakers, and why so many of us feel always inadequate.”—Ursula Franklin

“Ultimately, our resistance is grounded in an even deeper ‘yes!’—that eternal ‘yes!’ of boundless, unconditional love that beats at the heart of reality.”

—Sam Donaldson

1. EXPRESSING OUR SYMPATHY & SOLIDARITY

As Quakers, we embrace the concept of “that of God/Light in everyone.” During times of violence, our hearts ache for all those impacted by the conflict. It’s easy to get lost in anger and fear during war, focusing only on the enemy and overlooking the shared humanity that unites us.



Compassion for All
Acknowledge the suffering of those impacted by violence, including marginalized and vilified communities.

However, as Friends, we are called to look beyond the immediate turmoil, to recognize the value of every life, and to offer love and compassion to all affected by the violence. Our sorrow extends to the lives lost, the homes and communities destroyed, and the profound wounds that may linger for generations.

2. EXPLORING HISTORIC CONTEXT

Violence we are witnessing today is not a standalone event; it is the outcome of a complex interplay of historical, political, economic, and social elements. Tensions may have been brewing for years, possibly even decades, stemming from deep-rooted grievances, power struggles, and conflicting identities.



Avoid Oversimplification
Simplified narratives contribute to division and misunderstanding. Nuance is essential.

While it may be easy to oversimplify the situation by painting one side as entirely right and the other as entirely wrong, such simplifications only fuel animosity and division. As Friends, we acknowledge the significance of grasping these intricacies. The current turmoil, though tragic, mirrors a history of unresolved disputes and misinterpretations.

To navigate this intricate terrain, it is vital to avoid assigning blame solely to one party. Instead, we should strive to promote dialogue and reconciliation. True peace can only be achieved by acknowledging and addressing underlying causes of conflict, rather than merely reacting to immediate effects.



3. VIOLENCE WON'T SOLVE THE PROBLEM

War, inherently, is a force of destruction. It fragments communities, instills fear and suspicion, and perpetuates cycles of violence that can span generations. Despite the illusion of a quick resolution to conflicts that war may present, history has repeatedly demonstrated that it rarely leads to lasting peace.



War Perpetuates Violence
Conflicts often deepen and create new grievances, fueling future violence.

In the Quaker community, we recognize that genuine peace transcends the mere absence of war. It embodies principles of fairness, equality, and mutual regard, fostering an environment where individuals can exist without fear or oppression. Conversely, war often compounds the very issues it aims to address, engendering new grievances and reopening old wounds.



Sustainable Peace
Peace requires justice, equity, and dialogue, not violence.

The Quaker's testimony against war is rooted in a belief that violence begets violence and that only through nonviolent means can we hope to achieve a just and lasting peace. The tools of war—whether they be weapons, sanctions, or threats—cannot address the root causes of conflict, which are often found in poverty, inequality, and injustice.

Instead, we must turn to peacebuilding, diplomacy, and dialogue. By focusing on what unites us rather than what divides us, we can work towards solutions that are sustainable and just for all parties involved.

For further in-depth analysis of the myth of a 'Just War', read CFSC's book "Are We Done Fighting? Building Understanding of Hate and Division". You can also visit the websites of "World Beyond War" and "Project Ploughshares," two organizations dedicated to peace research and education.

"When injustice, disunity, and perversions of truth persist, say Friends, they can only be transformed or, if necessary, absorbed, and they will be but intensified by the compressive pressures of coercion and violence. Friends feel that they have, as a matter of fact, a greater respect for the power of evil than have their critics, who often appear to think it sufficient to treat evil by controlling the superficial manifestations of it."—Robert Byrd

“To end war and violence means having a better world, but that is impossible unless the people in it grow better. No relationship is finer than the people who compose it. Those who are endeavoring to abolish war, therefore, must themselves strive hard to become better people by living better lives.”—Richard Gregg,

4. NONVIOLENT ALTERNATIVES TO WAR

Across the globe, brave individuals and groups are taking part in nonviolent actions to safeguard civilians, advocate for rights, and promote peace. These endeavors, although often overshadowed by surrounding violence, play a vital role in establishing a lasting resolution to conflicts.

One notable example is Unarmed Civilian Protection/Accompaniment (UCP/A). This strategy involves trained civilians operating in conflict zones to shield vulnerable communities using nonviolent methods. UCP teams establish connections with all involved parties, monitor human rights violations, and offer a protective presence that serves as a deterrent to violence. Their efforts illustrate that nonviolence can be a potent and positive influence, even in the most difficult situations.



Unarmed Civilian Protection/Accompaniment
Trained civilians work in conflict zones to protect communities through nonviolent means.



Grassroots Peacebuilding
Local groups use nonviolent strategies to advocate for peace and protect rights.

Numerous grassroots initiatives concentrate on power, rights, interests, and compassion-driven activities. These endeavours might include mediation, conflict resolution training, dialogue facilitation, or advocating for policy adjustments that foster peace. In conflict-ridden areas, community members are actively involved in these endeavours, often facing significant personal risks. Supporting these initiatives can magnify their influence and aid in creating a more peaceful world.

For further details and up-to-date instances, explore resources like Waging Nonviolence, Metta Center for Nonviolence, and Nonviolence News.



5. GOVERNMENT CALLS TO ACTION

As Friends, we believe that our government has a moral responsibility to promote peace and justice on the global stage. The Canadian government can play a vital role in de-escalating conflicts and supporting nonviolent solutions. Here are specific actions that Friends can advocate for.



Peace Diplomacy: Canada must commit to relentless peace diplomacy, engaging in dialogue with all parties to the conflict and supporting international efforts to mediate and resolve disputes. Peaceful negotiations, backed by goodwill and a genuine commitment to peace, are essential to ending violence and building long-term stability.

Peace Diplomacy
Canada must engage in dialogue with all parties to promote a peaceful resolution.



Arms Embargo
Canada should implement an arms embargo to prevent further escalation.

Arms Embargo/Demilitarization: We call on the Canadian government to implement arms embargos to ensure that we do not contribute to escalating violence, and are not complicit in devaluation of all human life. Supplying weapons fuels violent conflict, prolongs suffering, and undermines efforts to achieve peace. Additionally, we call on the government to decrease armed military presence during internal conflicts, removing as many lethal weapons as possible from the view of the public.

Welcoming Refugees: Canada must demonstrate its commitment to human rights by welcoming refugees from the violence-affected regions. Providing safe haven for those fleeing violence is not only a moral imperative but also a powerful statement of solidarity with those who suffer. Refugee and temporary migration pathways should be available to all parties, provide achievable application requirements for displaced people, and be free from the influence of parties in violent conflict.



Welcoming Refugees
Canada must welcome refugees fleeing persecution and violent conflict.

“We are not for Names, nor Men, nor Titles of Government, nor are we for this Party, nor against the other, because of its Name and Pretence; but we are for Justice and Mercy, and Truth and Peace, and true Freedom, that these may be exalted in our Nation.”—Edward Burroughs

“The main thing is the belief that there’s not much point in faith without work. You put into practice what you believe.”—Betty Peterson

6. TOOLS AND RESOURCES

To support Friends in their peace advocacy, we have compiled a set of tools and resources that can be used in rallies, discussions, and communications with elected officials. These tools are designed to amplify our call for peace and to engage a wider audience in the cause of nonviolence.

Slogans for Protests:

- “Peace is Possible. Choose Diplomacy.”
- “Stop the War. Start the Dialogue.”
- “Weapons are for War. People are for Peace.”
- “None of us are free until all of us are free.”
- “Nothing for Us, without Us”



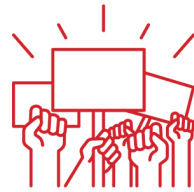
Talking Points:

“War only perpetuates cycles of violence. We must support nonviolent solutions that address the root causes of conflict.”

“Peace is not just the absence of war but the presence of justice, equity, and respect for all people.”

“Canada can and should play a leading role in promoting peace through diplomacy, not arms.”

“Today, wars involve a vastly more complex range of non-state actors than was the case a few decades ago. Complex thinking and feeling, grounded in recognizing that there are always alternatives to violence, is invaluable in staying creative and, ultimately, building peace.”



Social Media Hashtags:

- #QuakersForPeace
- #ChooseNonviolence
- #DiplomacyOverWar
- #StandUpForPeace
- #AlternativesToViolence
- #AlwaysAlternatives
- #UnarmedCivilianAccompaniment



FUTHER RESOURCES

- **Being a Quaker, Being an Activist:** A guide to Quaker activism, offering practical advice for how Friends can engage in social justice work. Available online and in many Quaker libraries.
- **Visiting your MP: A Friendly Encounter:** Tips and strategies for meeting with Members of Parliament to advocate for peace and nonviolence. Available online and in many Quaker libraries.
- **Are We Done Fighting? Building Understanding in a World of Hate and Division:** Book by Matt Legge for CFSC that dives much deeper into how we handle the various levels of conflict in our lives/world.
- **Nonviolent Tactics in the 21st Century:** Authored by Quaker and Nonviolence International Director Michel Beer, this book updates Gene Sharp's famous list, and is full of tangible actions that anyone can take in response to violence around them.
- **The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding:** Book By Lisa Schirch with practical tips on how individuals can engage in meaningful peace action.

Websites of Several Key Partners and Allies:

- <https://WagingNonviolence.org>
- <https://PloughShares.ca>
- <https://WorldBeyondWar.org>
- <https://MettaCenter.org>
- <https://NonviolenceNews.org>
- <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu>



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