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# Statement from the Oldest Peace Group in the U.S. on the Outbreak of Another Gaza War

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Fellowship of Reconciliation



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October 7, 2023 – The Fellowship of Reconciliation is horrified at the new war that has just broken out in Israel/Palestine. FOR, a pacifist organization since its conception in 1914 in Europe and 1915 in the United States, condemns the initiation of this latest stage of violent conflict. In condemning Hamas's attack launched on Shabbat and Simchat Torah, we are also led to condemn Israel for its decades of occupation, siege, and human rights violations and abuses that have led up to this moment.

At least 100 Israelis have been killed, over 900 wounded. Dozens of Israeli soldiers and civilians are missing and Hamas is reporting that they have been taken hostage. The Health Ministry in Gaza is reporting around 200 Palestinians killed so far by Israeli air strikes and over 1,600 injured and we expect this number to climb exponentially in the coming days. Among the strikes that Israel has already conducted, was the bombing of the tall Palestine Tower in Gaza City, which houses media institutions, offices, as well as apartments. According to Palestinian sources, the Department of Charitable Institutions building in Gaza City has been completely destroyed by airstrikes.

FOR unequivocally condemns actions of violence that avoid the harder battles of justice. The killing and maiming of civilians, whether by Hamas rockets or Israeli airstrikes are unjustifiable, a war crime under international law. Also, unjustifiable are the actions of Israel that led to this current war: decades of military occupation with no end in sight, apartheid policies, recurrent massacres, and a siege so brutal that has turned Gaza into the largest open-air prison on earth.

FOR recognizes and condemns the failure of the Biden administration to pursue a peaceful solution to this entrenched conflict while providing Israel with almost \$3.8 billion annually in unconditional military aid. Even while pursuing normalization

agreements between Israel and Arab countries, the U.S. has not worked to bring an end to the occupation or demanded an improvement in the rights and status of Palestinians. To call Hamas's actions "unprovoked," as the White House initially did in a statement today, is to put one's head in the sand, ignoring decades of settlement building, land confiscation, child arrests, home demolitions, and the like, as well as recent of settler and military violence against Palestinians. Just one day before the initiation of this current conflict the Israeli military protected an extremist Israeli pogrom in the West Bank village of Huwara, resulting in the death of a 16-year-old Palestinian child.

Rev. Graylan Scott Hagler offered words from Hosea 8:7 that say, "For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." "The ignoring of grave injustices against Palestinians, and an Israeli society that begins to resemble the segregation and injustices pre and post-civil war in the US makes for no small wonder that the frustration and pain will result in violence and war," Rev. Hagler said.

"While horrified by Hamas's actions and praying for all those, both Israeli and Palestinian, who have been killed, injured, and kidnapped, I am also deeply fearful of the death toll that is yet to come in Gaza," said FOR Executive Director Ariel Gold. "Past Israeli military actions in Gaza have taken the lives of countless children, women, men, and the elderly and traumatized an entire generation. Whether this current war results in another status quo in Gaza, as past wars have, or a reoccupation of Gaza by Israel, this violence will not aid the aims of safety, equality, freedom, and peace for all people between the river and the sea. In the words of renowned theologian, political analyst, and former FOR executive director, A.J. Muste, 'There is no way to peace. Peace is the way.'"

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