

**Statement from the UUSF/Human Rights Working Group  
To the UUSF Board of Trustees and Congregation – Nov 5, 2023**

We, the members of the UUSF Human Rights Working Group, in accordance with our committee's Purpose, wish to verify to the UUSF Board of Trustees, and to our entire Congregation, that we, along with the world at large, grieve in sorrow and anguish as we witness the catastrophic ongoing war in Israel and Palestine, which cannot be ignored.

We believe it is urgent now to call upon our Society's congregational members, to act in accordance with what we as UUs have proclaimed as our values for many years in our Principles especially the 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>: ***The inherent worth and dignity of every person;*** and ***The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.***

Our UUSF HRWG Committee Purpose statement is:

***“To identify and address current human rights violations locally, nationally and internationally in accordance with our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Values; To provide opportunities to engage in discussion to develop practical strategies to ameliorate unjust abuses and policies through education, advocacy and actions to protect the rights of all peoples; and To unite and collaborate with other organizations in support of these aims.”***

UUSF HRWG agrees with and adopts the UU Justice in the Middle East statement of 10/19/2023 (attached). We also agree with its outline of actions to stop the escalation of further violence in this region. We will present educational events on the history of this region with perspectives to better understand the roots of this conflict. And, as is stated in the UJME statement, we *“believe it is not antisemitic to criticize the oppressive acts of the Israeli government, military, and settlers. We oppose definitions of antisemitism used to stifle activism for Palestinian rights. We amplify calls to oppose antisemitism and Islamophobia.”*

Thus, as time is of the essence, we hope that you will join us to truly live our values with a commitment to work for justice for all inhabitants of the Israeli and Palestinian lands. We endorse the following requests to our government representatives and parties in conflict to:

- Demand an immediate ceasefire!
- Ensure humanitarian aid and assistance be made available immediately to Gaza.
- Abide by the United Nations Geneva Conventions.
- Stop the ongoing ethnic cleansing in Gaza and the West Bank.

Respectfully yours,

Signed: HRWG co-chairs and UU members

s/ Jeff Pekrul

s/ Rev. Millie Phillips

s/ Dolores Perez Heilbron

s/ Melvin Starks

s/ Bruce Neuburger

s/ David Heilbron

s/ Robin Larsen

s/ John Meliska

s/ Veronica Masterson

s/ Larry Danos

s/ Rev. Meg Whitaker-Greene

s/ Dennis Adams

## ACTION ALERT!



### **Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East Statement on the Escalating Disaster in Palestine & Israel - Call for Immediate Ceasefire**

[https://www.uujme.org/news\\_and\\_events](https://www.uujme.org/news_and_events)

**Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East (UUJME) is anguished by the current violence in Palestine and Israel. We are horrified by the attacks on civilians by Palestinian fighters from Gaza and the taking of captives. We hold in our hearts everyone impacted. We are witnessing acts of the Israeli military against Palestinians in Gaza that [a group of 800 scholars and other experts warn is a potential genocide](#). We lift up the Unitarian Universalist community witnessing the situation, recognizing that our community includes people from across the world and from diverse faith traditions. Many Unitarian Universalists have roots in the Holy Land and the region around it, including those of Palestinian Christian, Palestinian Muslim, Jewish, and blended heritage. We grieve with all who are feeling pain from this situation as an embodied experience of generational trauma.**

**As part of the Unitarian Universalist community, UUJME covenants to uphold Unitarian Universalist principles and values. Our respect for the inherent worth and dignity of all people is paramount to our call for an end**

to hostilities and the support of solutions that will bring about true safety for both Palestinians and Israelis. The values of justice and equity uphold the right of self-determination for the Palestinian people, many of whom have resisted their oppression non-violently for decades, with thousands dispossessed, imprisoned, and killed as a result.

We recognize that multiple truths co-exist. Prominent [human rights figures](#) and groups have concluded that an apartheid system exists in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories alongside settler colonialism. At the same time, we must name that antisemitism is a serious global phenomenon which we absolutely oppose. And we believe it is not antisemitic to criticize the oppressive acts of the Israeli government, military, and settlers. We oppose definitions of antisemitism that are used to stifle activism for Palestinian rights. And we amplify calls to oppose antisemitism and Islamophobia.

We amplify the [call of UUA President Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt](#) to engage with this issue as a faith community that has long been committed to social justice. We are ready to support Unitarian Universalist programs of learning, reflection, and action on Palestine and Israel that center justice and accountability. Access our [compilation of information sources, actions, statements, and relief funders](#).

The Unitarian Universalist community has [pledged to dismantle the legacies of the Doctrine of Discovery](#), which paved the way for global colonialism, including in the lands of Israel and Palestine. Our faith has also [embraced a call to accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions within ourselves and our institutions](#). These commitments must expand to widen the circle of beloved community and be more welcoming to Palestinians and those who work for Palestinian rights.

Because Unitarian Universalists have been on a journey of understanding and dismantling supremacy culture and colonialism, we must name that Israel's actions of apartheid and settler colonial displacement are escalating a fanatical racist attitude in Israel further enabled by the most ultra-right government in its history. We lift up the [Apartheid-Free Communities initiative](#), supported by Quaker, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and other organizations, dedicated to ending support for apartheid, settler colonialism, and military occupation.

Further violence will not bring about safety for anyone. We urge Unitarian Universalists to contact their senators and representatives, the President, and Secretary of State and demand they push for an immediate ceasefire on all sides, delivery of humanitarian aid, an end to Israel's bombardment and blockade of Gaza, and the rewriting of our country's foreign policy to enable ending the occupation and dismantling the mechanisms of apartheid. The vision of collective liberation, siding with love and safety for all, demands no less from us.

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# Contact US Reps and Senators - Demand Support for HR 786 and a Senate Counterpart

UUJME is amplifying the call from the American Friends Service Committee for the following actions.

We also urge you to Tweet at your US Reps and Senators. UUJME has posted [a Tweet that you can find and copy](#).

- **Action 1: Tell Congress to demand an immediate ceasefire**
  - - The ceasefire bill is [H. Res. 786](#).
    - **66% of U.S. voters agree that the U.S. should leverage its relationship with Israel to reach a ceasefire and a de-escalation of violence in Gaza - see [this poll](#).**
    - Use these dialers by [USCPR](#) or [JVP](#) to call your congressional representatives now. There are suggested scripts on the [next page](#) of this document.
    - If the dialers don't work, look up your Congressperson [here](#) and Senators [here](#).
    - They may have additional phone numbers listed on their websites, both for their DC office and their local office in your state.
    - If their mailbox is full, email them [here](#).
- **Action 2: Write a letter to the editor**
  - Find a newspaper you will write to. You can use [this FCNL tool](#) to identify one (after putting in your address, scroll down past the national newspapers.)
  - Tips on writing impactful letters are [below](#) in this document.
  - Use [this JVP link](#) to quickly send a letter to the New York Times.
  - Consult as needed JVP's [guide on writing letters to the editor](#).
- **Action 3: Take to the streets**
- What is needed most right now is thousands of people in the streets.
  - - There are daily rallies around the country. Find a protest near you [here](#) and [here](#).

- Share your plans to protest on social media and ask 5 friends to join you.
- Print an [AFSC poster](#), or [one of these](#), or [make your own](#).
- Use [these tips](#) to stay safer at protests.

**Action 4: [Donate](#) to support our Gaza emergency response**

- - We need your help in Gaza. Your gift puts the resources in place for humanitarian relief and long-term peacebuilding.
  - Donate [here](#). Easy link to share: [afsc.org/give2gaza](https://afsc.org/give2gaza).

• **Next Steps**

- - - Invite 5 friends to join you at [our action hour next week](#).
    - [Visit this page](#) frequently for new actions and analysis.
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  - - [Sign up for updates](#) on what AFSC is doing in Palestine and elsewhere.
    - Read and share our book [Light in Gaza: Writings Born of Fire](#) ([now free!](#))
    - Talk with people who disagree with you; [here is a resource](#) you might find useful.
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  - - Can you get the communities you are part of become [apartheid-free](#)?
    - If you are part of an institution that has investments (university, union, etc.), can you organize to [divest from violence and oppression](#) in Palestine?
- What other commitments can you make?

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AND ACTION ALERTS**

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