

Quakers

The Religious Society of Friends - Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri
Aotearoa/New Zealand

9 June 2021

**An Open Letter to the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern:
New Zealand must stand for a just settlement of the conflict between Israelis
and Palestinians.**

Jacinda Ardern
The Prime Minister
Parliament Buildings

Dear Jacinda Ardern

We wrote to you on 29 June 2020 to express the deep concern Quakers had about the plans Israel had announced for the annexation of Palestinian land in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The latest developments with Israeli efforts to evict families from Sheikh Jarrah, land and homes occupied by Palestinians for generations, demonstrates that Israel remains set on a course of aggressive action.

Quakers have a long history of working for peace and justice and consider that violence can never bring these about. This has been demonstrated in countless theatres of conflict around the world, from the troubles in Northern Ireland to the wars in Afghanistan. The longstanding Israeli policies and actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories can only escalate the violence, as we have once again witnessed. As with numerous previous instances, the current ceasefire will not endure while Israel continues to pursue its declared policy of aggressive occupation and annexation.

We do not condone violence on either side of this conflict, but even-handedness in attributing blame cannot be right when one party is seen to use overwhelming force and continual provocation.

The consequence of that imbalance in power and resource is now evident in the loss of life and major damage done in Gaza, including to schools and hospitals. Once again, the support, repair, and rebuild effort will be severely hampered by the blockade imposed by Israel. Since the last war in 2014, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency has been trying to get materials for rebuilding through the blockade and now, this work is made even more urgent. The blockade is another example of Israel's continued aggressive action and it must be removed as part of any settlement of the dispute.

Israel acts with impunity because of the failure of the international community to exert collective pressure for a negotiated settlement. We once again urge the Government to use its diplomatic and other international channels to seek effective global action to pressure Israel to stop their flagrant breaches of international law, return illegally occupied Palestinian land, and negotiate a just settlement of its dispute with Palestine.

Yours in Peace and Friendship

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Anne Hall" followed by "Alistair Hall" written in a smaller, more compact script.

Anne and Alistair Hall
Yearly Meeting Co-Clerks