

Bakewell Quakers

Letter to John Whitby, MP for Derbyshire Dales

5th June 2025

Dear John

I am writing on behalf of Bakewell Quakers about the situation in Gaza.

Quakers have been directly involved in peace work in Palestine and Israel for decades. Our long history of witness gives us particular experience from which to speak on this issue. One of our members spent time in Palestine as part of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel [EAPPI] sponsored by the World Council of Churches. We have watched with horror over the last 12 months as the Israeli government has deepened its collective punishment of Palestinians for the heinous crimes of Hamas on 7 October 2023.

Over the last three months, we have witnessed the deliberate dismantling of almost all life-sustaining systems within Gaza, the mass starvation of a people, the forced movement of Palestinians and a stated intention to expel them from Gaza. We have heard Israeli government ministers incite hatred against and dehumanise Palestinians.

Guided by the testimony and judgement of Palestinians, Israelis, and genocide and legal experts, Quakers in Britain believe that genocide and mass displacement are underway in the actions of the Israeli government and its military towards the population of Gaza. We acknowledge that a legal judgement on this is a matter for the International Courts. Quakers use the word 'genocide' only after deep and painstaking consideration, with the aim of opening eyes, minds and hearts and in the hope that the actions it describes will stop.

Against this backdrop, Bakewell Quakers call on our government to:

- Stop all UK support for Israel's violence in Gaza.
- Stop all UK arms exports to Israel immediately.
- Use all the UK's levers to pressure the Israeli government and Hamas to agree an immediate, permanent ceasefire, release the hostages, and allow aid to enter unhindered.

It is a central tenet of Quakerism that violence can never be the answer. We call for the violence in Gaza to stop – for an end to the killing of Palestinians and for the Israeli hostages to be returned home. Our long work for peace tells us that it can never be brought about by the systematic oppression of others.

Central to Quakerism is the experience that there is that of God in everyone. From this belief – that all people are unique, precious, children of God – all others follow.

Quakers therefore abhor racism, including antisemitism, in all its forms. We grieve the pain and fear that our friends in Jewish communities are experiencing. And we cannot say clearly enough: it is the current Israeli government that we believe is committing genocide, not the Jewish or Israeli people.

We would welcome your support for our views, and would be grateful if you would make them known to the Foreign Secretary and to the Prime Minister. We would be glad to discuss our concern with you.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Roger Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Roger Clarke

Clerk, Bakewell Quakers

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