

The Struggle for Unity on Israel/Palestine

One Quaker Meeting's Discernment Process to Join the Apartheid-Free Communities Coalition

By Steve Chase
Friends Meeting of Washington
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Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

-- Romans 12:2

Today's Religious Society of Friends is rightly inspired by the fact that our Quaker ancestors opposed the oppressive institution of slavery before any other Christian denomination in the American colonies. We are also rightly inspired by the fact that many of our spiritual ancestors became organizers and activists in the rapidly growing abolition movement in Britain and the newly formed United States. This history reminds us that, at our most faithful, the wider Quaker spiritual community has a long history of respecting "that of God" in everyone and working tirelessly for peace, justice, and equality for all God's children.

Yet, we have not always been faithful to this prophetic call. As noted by Quaker historians Donna McDaniel and Vanessa Julye in their book *Fit for Freedom, But Not for Friendship*, it took Quakers in the American colonies over a hundred years of intense discernment and even contentious debate before they finally spoke out in one voice against the sin of slavery. Even then, many Quakers in local meetings hesitated to participate in the broader abolition movement. Only ten percent of US Quakers boycotted slave-made plantation goods, and several of the most active Quaker abolitionists were often marginalized, or even removed from membership, by their home meetings. For a long time, some Quaker meetings in the United States even refused to admit African Americans as members.

My question today is can we build a deeper faithfulness and stronger unity than this as we work for a just and lasting peace in Israel/Palestine?

Quaker Unity and Disunity on Israel/Palestine

Unity among Friends on Israel/Palestine is growing. Some of this is the result of our past history. As Friends, we have a legacy of working against anti-Jewish bigotry, the horrific persecution of Jews in Europe in the first half of the 20th century, and the shameful refusal of the United States, Canada, and Britain to allow mass immigration of persecuted Jewish refugees into our countries before, during, and after the Nazi Holocaust. We also have a long history of solidarity with Palestinians through the founding of the Ramallah Friends School in 1869, our

humanitarian relief efforts in Gaza with Palestinians refugees from what had become Israel in 1948, and the many Quaker efforts to promote a just peace after the US-backed Israeli military occupation of the remaining 22 percent of historic Palestine in 1967.

The more immediate cause of our growing unity is the profound urgency felt by so many around the world after the military wing of Hamas attacked southern Israel on October 7, 2023, and committed war crimes against civilians, *and* the ongoing US-backed Israeli campaign of mass slaughter, displacement, and starvation of the 2.2 million Palestinians in Gaza ever since. Many Quaker congregations have done intense soul searching on what is a faithful response to this unprecedented scale of mass violence in Israel/Palestine. A business meeting minute from Salem Friends Meeting is representative: “At Salem Friends Meeting, we hold a variety of views and opinions on the current siege on Gaza, but as Quakers we are called to make a statement.... This conflict is not something which we can wait to address; this is a present and dire moment that requires response.”

In April 2024, eight major Quaker organizations from around the world came to unity and issued a joint statement in entitled “[A Different Future Is Possible: A Shared Quaker Vision for Peace in Palestine and Israel.](#)” The co-signers of this statement included the American Friends Service Committee, Canadian Friends Service Committee, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Friends World Committee for Consultation, Quakers in Britain, Quaker Council on European Affairs, Quaker Peace and Social Witness, and the Quaker United Nations Office.

Echoing allies in Jewish groups like If Not Now, Rabbis for Ceasefire, and Jewish Voice for Peace, this joint Quaker statement called for a permanent ceasefire, the mutual release of captives, restoration of humanitarian aid to Gaza, the creation of a just and lasting political settlement, and withholding US/Western aid to the State of Israel until it accepts the basic requirements of universal human rights and international law. Besides addressing the military wing of Hamas, Israel, and Western governments, the joint statement also called on Quakers and other people of goodwill to:

1. *Urgently call and fervently work for a permanent ceasefire and amplify our voices in our communities and at the local, state, and national levels.*
2. *Encourage decision-makers calling for a ceasefire and working for peace.*
3. *Organize and participate in teach-ins, actions, and protests until a ceasefire and a just and lasting peace are realized.*
4. *Actively support an end to Israel’s occupation and equal protection and rights for all people living under Israeli control and commit to actions as meetings/churches until this reality is realized.*
5. *Divest from corporations profiting from militarism, including the occupation of Palestine.*
6. *Support those in Israel and Palestine who are working for peace.*

In July 2025, many of these same international Quaker organizations issued an even stronger joint statement entitled [Quakers Discern Genocide Is Occurring in Gaza and Urge](#)

[Courageous Action](#). This statement calls on Friends everywhere to oppose the US-backed Israeli genocide that is devastating Gaza--as well as the long-standing US-backed system of Israeli apartheid against Palestinians, which is a root cause of the unprecedented scale of mass violence we have witnessed in Israel/Palestine for close to two years. The goal of all such efforts, of course, is not to pick sides between Hamas or the current government of Israel, but to work for peace, justice, and equality for everyone living between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

The good news is that a significant number of Quaker monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings have already endorsed these joint statements, or something like them. Many have also taken bold action as part of the growing interfaith campaign for peace and justice in Israel/Palestine. Many Quaker congregations, for example, have joined the [Apartheid-Free Communities](#) coalition, which was convened by the American Friends Service Committee back in 2022 and now includes over 700 different faith communities, businesses, and human rights/solidarity groups in the United States and around the world.

At the grassroots level, however, there has also been a countervailing pattern of hesitation or resistance to the core elements of these joint Quaker statements, and to Quaker congregations joining the Apartheid-Free Communities coalition. This was certainly true at Friends Meeting of Washington, where I am a member. Back in December 2023, after several emotionally-charged meetings, we were not even able to come to unity on a proposal by our Peace and Social Concerns Committee to hang a banner on our fence that read:

Seek Peace and pursue it.-- Psalm 34:14

**NEVER AGAIN, FOR ANYONE.
CEASEFIRE NOW!**

quakersdc.org

A few members and attenders even called the members of FMW's Peace and Social Concerns Committee "Hamas supporters" and "antisemites" because of our banner proposal. Tensions and frustration were very high and some of us on the Committee wondered if we would ever find a unified and faithful way forward as a spiritual community committed to peace, justice, and equality for all. We were even tempted to stop bringing up the issue of Israel/Palestine for collective discernment and action because it was so internally divisive. Some of us even considered leaving the Meeting because of what we felt was our spiritual community's lack of faithfulness to Friends testimonies and the Quaker legacy of prophetic,

faith-based activism. Yet, the members of our Committee, and several other concerned FMW members and attenders, ultimately rejected these paths.

While I had found the angry name calling a bit shocking, I recognized where it came from. Many people, including many Friends, hold a fully justified concern for Jewish safety and rights in light of centuries of anti-Jewish discrimination culminating in the Nazi Holocaust, while at the same time having an unjustifiable lack of understanding or empathy for the rights and safety of Palestinians. This one-sided outlook is actually very familiar to me. From my teen years to well into my late 20s, I shared this perspective and believed that the Palestinian people had little or no legitimate grievances against the State of Israel, that Palestinians were only motivated by unprovoked hate and anti-Jewish bigotry, and that those who criticized Israel's policies towards the Palestinians were either "antisemites" or "self-hating Jews."

In this, I was following the lead of my beloved Quaker activist icon Bayard Rustin, who fought so hard for freedom and equality for everyone in the United States, but shared my unwitting anti-Palestinian racism. Before his death in 1987, Rustin regularly denounced the views of all those who claimed that the State of Israel was in any way "racist, fascist, imperialistic, and the like." He also specifically rejected making any connection between Israeli policies and the South African system of apartheid, a connection now almost universally shared by international human rights organizations.

Rustin even placed a full-page ad in the Sunday editions of both *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* on June 28, 1970, urging the Nixon administration to increase its military aid to Israel. He did not view the State of Israel as an oppressor of the Palestinian people. In fact, he saw Arabs, including the Palestinians, as generally backward, violent, antisemitic, would-be oppressors of Israel and the Jewish people. Rustin saw his biased view as fully consistent with his "historic and deep sense of solidarity with the Jewish people" and his "appreciation of the State of Israel as a progressive and democratic society." While many of his Quaker allies were shocked by Rustin's call for vastly increasing US military aid, many still shared the core beliefs of his general outlook. I know I did.

Yet, from my own personal experience, I know that people can also renew their minds and grow in spiritual discernment. They can question their starting assumptions, pray for divine guidance, listen more carefully to marginalized voices, and deepen their empathy for people they hold unconscious biases about. They can also engage in more rigorous moral reasoning, study the history and current conditions in Israel/Palestine more carefully, and ultimately discern more clearly what justice and compassion demands in this situation.

I shared my own personal discernment journey in the 2017 Pendle Hill pamphlet *Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions? A Quaker Zionist Rethinks Palestinian Rights*. As the months unfolded after the shock of October 7th, I began to see this same transformation happening within my Meeting—a transformation also happening within much of the US Jewish community. After apologies for harsh words, a recommitment to respectful dialogue, and months of mutual learning and discernment initiated by the Peace and Social Concerns

Committee, we actually found our way to meaningful unity on Israel/Palestine. At our July 2024 business meeting, we finally endorsed the joint Quaker statement “A Different Future Is Possible.”

From the 2024 Joint Quaker Statement to the Interfaith Apartheid-Free Pledge

Building on this growing unity from a starting place of anguished disunity and confusion, FMW’s Peace and Social Concerns Committee decided in August to ask our Meeting to take another step and consider joining the [Apartheid-Free Communities](#) coalition by endorsing its membership Pledge, which reads:

WE AFFIRM our commitment to freedom, justice, and equality for the Palestinian people and all people;

WE OPPOSE all forms of racism, bigotry, discrimination, and oppression; and

WE DECLARE ourselves an Apartheid-free community and to that end,

WE PLEDGE to join others in working to end all support to Israel’s Apartheid regime, settler colonialism, and military occupation.

Our four-page proposal was sent out a couple weeks before the September business meeting. It included: 1) the Pledge, 2) a background section that explained its moral consistency with longstanding Quaker testimonies of peace, justice, and equality for all; 3) a list of the diverse Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu organizations that had already signed the Pledge, including several Quaker congregations and organizations; and 4) some further learning resources for our Meeting’s consideration. At FMW’s September business meeting, though, we did not ask for a decision by the Meeting. We just asked to hear any questions and concerns that people had about the Pledge. We explained that we would only seek a formal decision after a month or two of deep discernment and dialog among the members and attenders of our very large Quaker community--and that we would also organize several opportunities for deeper listening and discussion among all of us in the coming month or two.

We decided on this approach because we knew that for many Quaker communities endorsing the Pledge had been even harder to come to unity on than endorsing the “A Different Future Is Possible” statement. This is due to a subtle, but still important, difference between the two statements. While the 2024 joint Quaker statement acknowledges that “a growing number of international human rights organizations have documented that Israel’s treatment of Palestinians meets the legal definition of apartheid,” it does not directly assert that Israel’s military occupation of Palestine has become a system of apartheid. The Apartheid-Free Communities Pledge does, which some Friends feel is “a step too far.”

As our Peace and Social Concerns Committee heard from Friends at FMW’s September business meeting, the sticking point for several people was not about the first three lines of the

Pledge. Nor was there any objection to saying we support an end to Israel's oppressive military occupation of Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. But, there were concerns raised about naming this policy "apartheid." As one person said at FMW's September business meeting, "Doesn't 'apartheid' just refer to the white supremacist regime that ruled South Africa? If so, how can the State of Israel be described as an apartheid regime?" Learning about this starting assumption among some FMW members was very helpful for our Committee.

Over the next month, the Peace and Social Concerns Committee responded to this concern in two different ways. First, we acknowledged that the word "apartheid" was coined by the racist minority regime in South Africa, but explained that the term has since been given a wider meaning, including under international law. It was first codified as a crime against humanity in the 1977 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, and then strengthened in the 1998 Rome Statute to the International Criminal Court.

Second, the Committee noted that while there were some real differences between the South African system and other apartheid regimes around the world, all of them share the three defining characteristics of apartheid under international law:

1. An intent to maintain domination by one group over another.
2. A context of systematic oppression by one group over another.
3. Inhuman acts by the dominant group against the other.

This explanation broadened FMW's understanding of the crime of apartheid, but for some Friends there was still a question about whether these three characteristics are descriptive of Israel's treatment of the 7.5 million Palestinians now living under its control throughout Israel/Palestine.

Our Committee addressed this as well. First, we pointed out that when South African anti-apartheid activists Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela visited Israel/Palestine on fact-finding missions, they both reported that Israel's apartheid regime was far more oppressive than the apartheid system in South Africa. Second, we asked members of the Meeting who had worked in Israel/Palestine, or taken part in fact-finding delegations there, to speak one-on-one to hesitant Friends and share their direct observations of the apartheid policies in play in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. To provide even more systematic evidence about the many oppressive apartheid policies adopted by the State of Israel since at least 1967, our Committee also shared links to the recent research reports on Israeli apartheid by [Amnesty International](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), the Israeli human rights group [B'Tselem](#), and the Palestinian human rights group [Al Haq](#). Furthermore, we shared the advisory finding of the [International Criminal Court](#), which ruled in July 2024 that the decades-long Israeli military occupation of Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem was illegal under international law and constituted the crime of apartheid.

This information proved to be persuasive. Heading into our October business meeting, there was now a growing agreement among FMW members and attenders that the State of Israel—with the financial, military, and diplomatic support of the United States and other Western countries—had constructed a complex apartheid regime over the Palestinians living in Israel/Palestine. We also agreed it would be faithful to our Quaker testimonies on peace, justice, and equality for us to join an interfaith coalition seeking to change this oppressive status quo, since it a root cause of the unprecedented scale of mass violence and collective punishment we had been witnessing in Israel/Palestine since late 2023.

The only remaining hesitation about endorsing the Apartheid-Free Pledge, and joining the Apartheid-Free Communities coalition, was voiced by an FMW Friend in September's business meeting. He shared his concern about the phrase "settler colonialism" in the Pledge. This Friend questioned whether it was accurate to use the term "settler-colonialism" to describe Israeli policy. While he acknowledged that the term settler-colonialism is accurate to describe the US policies towards our continent's indigenous peoples, he asked if it is fair to call it settler colonialism when a historically persecuted people seeks safety by moving its most threatened members to a part of the world that their ancient spiritual ancestors had once called home?

Is Settler-Colonialism a Feature of Israeli Apartheid?

Given that this question has been a stumbling block in coming to unity on the Apartheid-Free Pledge in more than a few Quaker meetings, it deserves careful consideration and deliberation by Quakers everywhere. Several Friends I know have said to me that they agree that the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories live under an apartheid regime enforced by a permanent military occupation. They even agree that "settler-colonialism" is a fair description of the unrelenting growth of illegal Israeli settlements enforced by both settler and military violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories since 1967. Yet, many of these same Friends are still hesitant to use the term "settler colonialism" because it might imply that there was something unjust or colonial about the early Zionist movement and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

In FMW's Peace and Social Concerns Committee dialogues with our meeting's members and attenders, we stressed one key point—that there is little to no doubt that Israel began implementing a settler-colonial policy on the remaining 22 percent of historic Palestine that it militarily occupied in 1967. To make this vivid, we shared with people the words of Israeli Minister of Defence's speaking to the newly conquered Palestinian people in 1967, when he said, "We have no solution, you shall continue to live like dogs, and whoever wishes may leave, and we will see where this process leads."

We also explained that the process led almost immediately to settler-colonialism. While Israel's policymakers knew full well that it was against international law, and while many Israelis opposed illegal settlements in the newly Occupied Palestinian Territories, the government soon began transferring a growing number of Israeli citizens into Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. The goal, still contested by some Jewish Israelis and many Jews around the world,

was to build up an ever-expanding network of larger and larger segregated Jewish Israeli colonies that dispossessed Palestinians and took over increasing amounts of their land and resources.

During the June 2023 Friends United Meeting's fact-finding delegation to the West Bank and East Jerusalem, I saw the fruits of this almost six-decades policy first hand. On that trip, co-led by North Carolina Quakers Max and Jane Carter, we saw many examples of land and water theft, home demolitions, armed checkpoints and restrictions on Palestinian travel, Israelis burning Palestinian crops and shooting at Palestinian farmers, violent Israeli settler and soldier attacks against hundreds of Palestinian towns and villages, and mass incarceration that regularly includes hundreds of Palestinian children a year. We also saw, again and again, the impacts of segregated roads, segregated Israeli colonies, segregated legal systems, and the increasing annexation of Palestinian land. My main message to hesitant Friends is that all of this is more than enough to accurately name Israel's 58-year-old policy in the Occupied Palestinian Territories as "apartheid" *and* "settler-colonialism."

This claim is true no matter what people think about the early Zionism movement, or the founding of the State of Israel. The policy of apartheid and settler colonialism in the occupied Palestinian Territories clearly violates international law and the core conviction of the Apartheid-Free Communities coalition, whose primary slogan is:

**ALL PEOPLE ARE
EQUAL AND SHOULD
BE TREATED WITH
DIGNITY AND RESPECT**



APARTHEID-FREE.ORG



Yet, even though this 58-year-old policy is enough to justify the use of this term settler-colonialism in the Pledge, I believe there is also value in learning more about the history of the

early Zionist movement and the State of Israel's policies towards Palestinians before 1967. Towards that end, I often encourage people to read Nancy Gallagher's *Quakers in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, which covers Quaker observations from the late 19th to the mid-20th centuries. I also often share what I have learned about this period of history by describing the views of three early Zionist leaders.

The first is Theodore Herzl, the Jewish intellectual living in Vienna who is widely viewed as the founder of the "Political Zionist" movement. He earned this reputation by writing the movement's 1896 manifesto, *The Jewish State*, and organizing the first World Zionist Congress in 1897, which was attended by over 250 Jewish ethno-nationalists from 15 different countries. At that Congress, this tiny group of Jewish activists addressed an issue of great concern to the vast majority of European Jews--the very real problem of anti-Jewish bigotry, which in the late 1800s included serious legal and social discrimination in Western Europe and violent pogroms against Jewish communities in Eastern Europe. Their proposed solution was that European Jews should organize themselves to gain Great Power support for Jews leaving Europe in mass and creating a well-armed, Jewish nation state in historic Palestine. This was an audacious vision at the time, given that the Jewish population of Palestine only made up about four percent of the Palestinian people.

The biggest challenge for the tiny group of Political Zionists, however, was that their proposed solution to antisemitism was opposed by the vast majority Jews in Europe and the United States. It was seen by most Jews at the time as a foolish pipedream and, to many, as both blasphemous and unjust. A big part of the organized Jewish push-back against the Political Zionist movement was because it was, in Herzl's own words, "somewhat colonial." Even before publishing his manifesto, Herzl admitted in his diary that Zionist Jews will need to displace and dispossess most of the Palestinians to create his envisioned "Jewish State." The corporate charter that Herzl co-wrote for the new movement's Jewish-Ottoman Land Company also explicitly included the goal of displacing Palestinians to "other provinces and territories of the Ottoman Empire."

To be fair, though, Herzl was not a violent man. He believed that the Zionist objective of creating an ethno-nationalist Jewish State in Palestine could be achieved through Great Power support, persuading more Jews to join the movement's Palestine Jewish Colonial Association, and providing financial incentives to "the indigenous population" to leave Palestine. Other Zionist leaders, however, were much more militaristic about what would be required to fulfil the Zionist dream of turning Palestine into a Jewish State.

A good example of this is the Russian Zionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky, who in 1925 proclaimed that, "Zionism is a colonizing venture and, therefore, it stands or falls on the question of armed force." Why? As Jabotinsky explained:

Every native population in the world resists colonists as long as it has the slightest hope of being able to rid itself of the danger of being colonized. That is what the Arabs in Palestine are doing, and what they will persist in doing as long as there remains a solitary spark of

hope that they will be able to prevent the transformation of “Palestine” into the “Land of Israel.”

Jabotinsky was on the right-wing of the Zionist movement, of course, and was opposed by many Jews, including some active in the fledgling Zionist movement. At the same time, his settler-colonial outlook was widely-shared by most moderate Zionists, and by left-leaning Labor Zionists. This last group included David Ben-Gurion, who became the first Prime Minister of the State of Israel. Ben-Gurion also believed that ethnic cleansing and the violent subjugation of the Palestinian people was necessary to create a viable Jewish State whose population would need to be at least eighty percent Jews. In 1937, he wrote a letter to his son, saying “the Arabs will have to go, but one needs an opportune moment for making it happen, such as a war.”

Jabotinsky’s and Ben-Gurion’s hoped-for war was launched by armed Zionist militias ten years later and it soon escalated into a wider regional war through most of 1948. The Political Zionists called it the War of Independence, but the Palestinians called it the Nakba, which is Arabic for catastrophe. For all the positives that emerged for the Jewish immigrants to Palestine before, during, and after the Nazi years, the founding of the State of Israel was certainly a catastrophe for Palestinians. They ended up paying the price for Europe’s crimes and for the US, Canadian, and British refusals to allow mass immigration of Nazi-persecuted Jews into their own countries. The impact was staggering. Fifteen thousand Palestinians were killed during the Nakba, over 500 Palestinian villages and towns were wiped off the map, and three quarters of the Palestinian population that used to live in what became the State of Israel were expelled to the remaining 22 percent of historic Palestine or to refugee camps in surrounding countries.

After the newly declared State of Israel won the war in 1948, it also refused to allow the 750,000 displaced Palestinian refugees to return to their homes, farms, and businesses in the 78 percent of Palestine that had now become the State of Israel. This policy of ethnic cleansing was maintained by Israel even though the Palestinians’ right of return was guaranteed under international law and specifically authorized by UN resolution 194 and, later, by resolution 3236. The small minority of Palestinians remaining in what became the State of Israel were also placed under military rule and were not allowed to become voting citizens in Israel until 1966. Even then, they faced severe legal restrictions that made them second class citizens. Many of these restrictions persist, or have even worsened, to this day.

There is good reason to believe that the post-1967 Israeli policy of settler-colonialism did not appear out of thin air, but had historical roots that go back as far as the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Today, of course, we cannot change what happened in past centuries. Yet, for citizens of Western governments—including the United States, which has been the main global power supporting and enabling the State of Israel’s policies since 1948—we do have a moral responsibility to push for a just political settlement where all the people living “between the River and the Sea” enjoy security, equality, human rights, and self-determination going forward. As a Palestinian village priest in the West Bank explained to my 2023 Quaker delegation, “It does not matter if your name is Moshe, Mohammad, or Mathew, all are precious in the sight of God.” Our Peace and Social Concerns Committee argued at FMW’s October 2024

business meeting that this core conviction of our faith is why our Meeting should endorse the Pledge as part of the Quaker movement's long-standing prophetic witness for peace and justice.

FMW's Decision and Next Steps

After I stood and formally reintroduced the Peace and Social Concerns Committee's proposal to FMW's October business meeting, I sat down expecting a long and potentially contentious discussion, but it did not happen. After five minutes of supportive comments, FMW's business meeting came to a clear decision on endorsing the Pledge *and* becoming an active member of the Apartheid-Free Communities coalition. Our Meeting discerned that the Pledge was not a step too far, but the next needed step in our Meeting's prophetic witness promoting peace, justice, and equality for everyone in Israel/Palestine.

The challenge now is to turn the commitments in the Pledge into meaningful action. To start this process, the Peace and Social Concerns Committee shared with our Meeting the welcome letter from the lead organizer of the Apartheid-Free Communities coalition that included a [link to the coalition's webpage](#) suggesting the types of actions that Apartheid-Free faith communities can take. The Committee also regularly shares the monthly Apartheid-Free Communities newsletter with all FMW's members and attenders, which includes many specific and timely action opportunities.

As a result, FMW Friends have lobbied with the Friends Committee on National Legislation for ceasefire resolutions, an arms embargo on illegal US weapons transfers to Israel, and the restoration of US funding to UNRWA. Some of our members and attenders have also taken part in weekly AFSC Action Hours to support these same goals. We have also participated in numerous vigils, marches, and demonstrations in DC, often carrying the Peace and Social Concern Committee's banner, or wearing "End Israeli Apartheid" T-shirts. We have had our Trustees Committee screen our investments in order to divest from any companies on the AFSC's Divest for Palestinian Rights webpage. We formed the sixth most successful fundraising team for the massive 2025 UNRWA-USA DC Gaza 5K Walk and have provided rent-free space at our Meetinghouse for events, respite, and meetings by Palestine Legal, Jewish Voice for Peace, Students for Justice in Palestine, and Christians for Ceasefire and Justice. We have also organized or participated in several internal and public education events, whether online or in person.

We have also worked hard to build the larger Apartheid-Free Communities coalition. We donated Meeting funds to support the coalition. We sent two representatives to the first in-person national interfaith conference of the coalition in December 2024, and we have recruited Baltimore Yearly Meeting's Peace and Social Concern Committee as well as BYM's Palestinian Israel Peace and Justice Working Group to endorse the Pledge and join the Apartheid-Free Communities network. We are also increasingly being tapped as a resource by other Quaker groups wanting to know more about the Apartheid-Free Communities coalition and the larger movement for Palestinian rights and a just peace in Israel/Palestine.

Perhaps most importantly, we have collaborated with representatives from many other local Quaker congregations, yearly meetings, and Friends organizations that have signed on to the Apartheid-Free Pledge. Together, we have created a [Quaker Affinity Group](#) within the coalition. This Affinity Group works to:

- Encourage and support more Quaker congregations and organizations to sign on to the Apartheid-Free Communities Pledge and join the growing anti-apartheid movement;
- Foster active collaboration and the sharing of educational resources and action ideas among representatives from the various Apartheid-Free Quaker communities; and
- Promote affinity group members working in coalition with the wider Apartheid-Free Communities coalition locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

We are organizing together to provide inspiration, speakers, workshops, resources, monthly organizer calls, and collaborative action opportunities for Apartheid-Free Quaker congregations and groups around the world.

Conclusion

Friends Meeting of Washington and the Quaker Affinity Group know that the immediate task ahead is ending corporate and Western government complicity with Israel's genocidal assault on the people of Gaza and its increasing violence in the West Bank. Yet, we also know that there will not be a sustainable, long-term, or just peace without ending Israeli apartheid. We therefore are prepared to take up the long-term task of building a strong international, grassroots, anti-apartheid movement alongside Palestinian and Israeli activists. This, of course, will require us to engage in relentless peace and justice advocacy, humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding, and strategic nonviolent resistance—the staples of Quaker faith-based activism.

As the new Outreach Coordinator of the Quaker Affinity Group, I often hear from people in the wider Quaker world about how their Meetings are just too divided, too ill-informed, or too apathetic to ever come to unity and endorse the Apartheid-Free Pledge and get active in the larger anti-apartheid movement. My response is that the experience of Friends Meeting of Washington proves that Quaker Meetings can engage in serious spiritual discernment and move from fractured disunity and inaction to unity and powerful faith-based activism for peace, justice, and equality for everyone in Israel/Palestine.

Steve Chase is a member Friends Meeting of Washington and the author of the 2017 Pendle Hill pamphlet, Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions? A Quaker Zionist Rethinks Palestinian Rights. He is a member of the Quaker Palestine Israel Network and Baltimore Yearly Meeting's Palestinian Israeli Peace and Justice Working Group. More recently, he became the Outreach Coordinator for the Apartheid-Free Communities' Quaker Affinity Group. He can be reached at stevechase338@gmail.com.