

Quaker Action



Love as action

Neighbors protecting
neighbors

pg. 7

Hope lives in Gaza

pg. 11

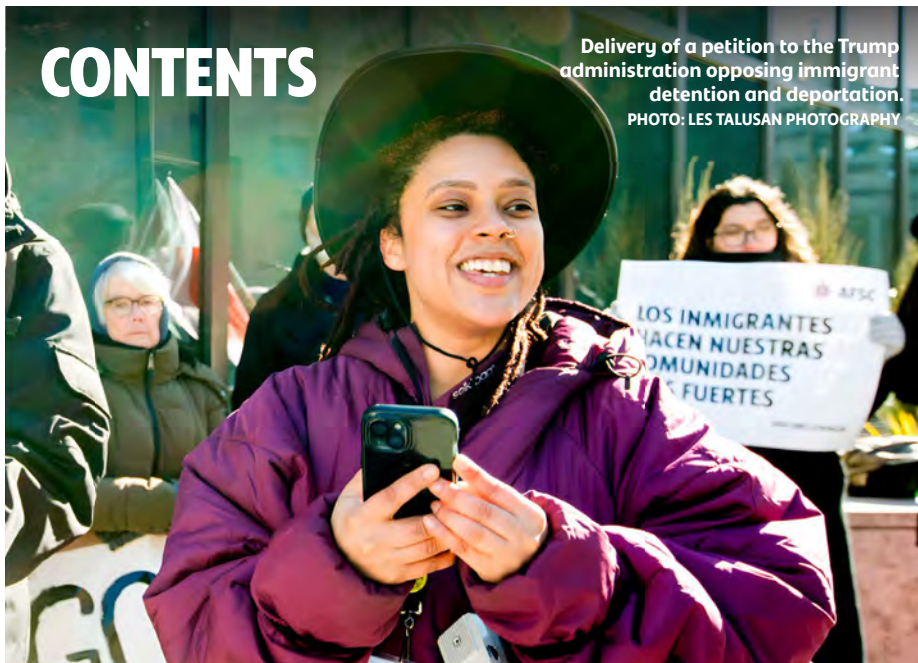
Healing from trauma

pg. 14



**American
Friends
Service
Committee**

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Delivery of a petition to the Trump administration opposing immigrant detention and deportation.
PHOTO: LES TALUSAN PHOTOGRAPHY

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Quaker Action

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WHO WE ARE

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) promotes a world free of violence, inequality, and oppression.

Guided by the Quaker belief in the divine light within each person, we nurture the seeds of change and the respect for human life to fundamentally transform our societies and institutions.

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COVER PHOTO

AFSC Gaza staff member Firas takes a moment during a distribution of supplies to displaced families with young children.

Photo: Ahmed Hattab



LETTER FROM OUR GENERAL SECRETARY

A trauma healing session for community members in South Sudan.

Dear Friends,

In times of struggle, Quakers have always been called to act—to speak truth to power and to show the world what love can do.

That spirit is alive in these pages. Community patrols in San Diego watching out for immigration enforcement in their neighborhoods. Quakers in Iowa advocating to keep children from going hungry when school is out. Survivors in South Sudan and Somalia helping others heal from the trauma of war. Farmers in Gaza planting seeds amid the rubble.

These are courageous acts. They are happening as communities face rising authoritarianism, mass deportations, and attacks on their dignity and rights.

But this is the work we are made for. AFSC was built for moments like this. And together—with you—we are organizing, resisting, and building power that will outlast this moment.

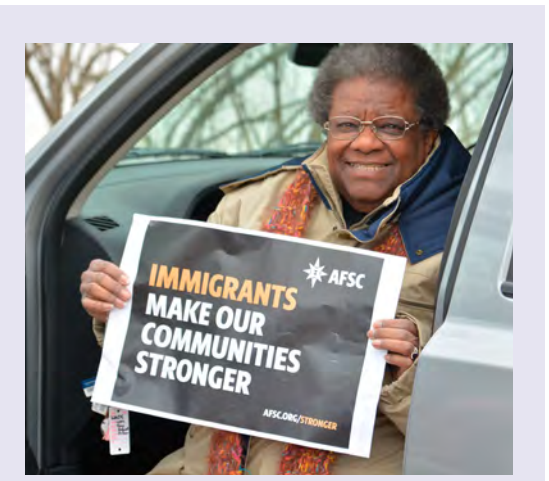
For more than a century, AFSC has stood alongside those most impacted by injustice. That witness continues today, made possible by your support and solidarity.

Thank you for walking this path with us.



In peace,

Joyce Ajlouny
GENERAL SECRETARY



Love as action— support AFSC today!

Our AFSC community puts love and compassion into action every day—working for a world that is more peaceful, just, and sustainable for all.

Supporters like you make all the work you read about in Quaker Action possible. Become a donor or renew your gift today to help meet urgent needs and work for long-term change.

Visit afsc.org/QA or give us a call in Philadelphia at 888-588-2372.

Thank you for being part of our community of peacebuilders!



SCAN TO DONATE

ALUMNI news



Joseph Gerson (right), pictured with antiwar activist and atomic bomb survivor Terumi Tanaka. COURTESY PHOTO

Congratulations to **Joseph Gerson**, who was named co-president of the International Peace Bureau. The organization was one of the first to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. For over 40 years, Joseph served as the director of regional programs for AFSC's Northeast Region.

For decades, **Mike Gray** coordinated AFSC's Joint Service Project program with Intermountain Yearly Meeting. In his role, he helped give youth a place to gain hands-on volunteer experience. Mike passed away on Jan. 8.

Do you have news or stories to share? Email us at alumni@afsc.org



Tonya Histand
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

AFSC alum **Ruth Asawa** was recently featured in a major retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. As a child during World War II, Ruth and her family were forced into internment. After graduating from the internment camp high school, she went to college through a scholarship from the Japanese American Student Relocation Council, a project of AFSC.

Civil rights leader **Bernard Lafayette** passed away in March. In 1963, AFSC recruited Bernard to bring his organizing work to Chicago. He led nonviolent workshops for tenants, youth, and community groups. Bernard later served as national coordinator for the Poor People's Campaign and spent decades teaching nonviolence and peace education.



Avel Gordly

Avel Gordly, the first Black woman elected to the Oregon State Senate and a lifelong activist and educator, died in February. In 1983, AFSC hired Avel to lead the Southern Africa Program, which was focused on anti-apartheid and refugee relief. Avel made national headlines when she was promoted to regional director of AFSC.

Carol Jensen was a Lutheran pastor, an AFSC representative for the Middle East in the 1980s, and AFSC's national peace secretary in 1990. Carol passed away on Aug. 2.

Get Alumni Network updates and join our Facebook group!

[AFSC.ORG/ALUMNI](https://www.afsc.org/alumni)



Updates

FROM THE AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE



Iowa community members write letters urging Gov. Kim Reynolds to opt in to the USDA's Sun Bucks Program. Photo: Jon Krieg/AFSC

IOWA

NO KID SHOULD GO HUNGRY WHILE SCHOOL IS OUT

This summer is looking brighter for around 240,000 kids from low-income families in Iowa. Earlier this year, Gov. Kim Reynolds agreed to join the USDA's Sun Bucks program. That will provide eligible students with \$120 in food assistance during the three months when school is out.

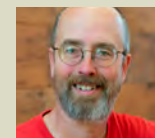
This win comes after two years of advocacy by community groups, including AFSC. The change will bring nearly \$29 million in food benefits to Iowa families. That will generate over \$43 million for the local economy.

Sun Bucks was created by Congress in 2023 with bipartisan support. As of this writing, all but 12 states have implemented the program. AFSC developed the No Hunger Summer campaign to encourage Quakers and others to advocate in hold-out states. Iowa Friends supported the effort, alongside partners like the Iowa Hunger Coalition.

We hope this win moves other states to adopt this vital program.



Rick Wilson
U.S. ECONOMIC JUSTICE DIRECTOR



Jon Krieg
MIDWEST REGION COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST



A gathering of the Apartheid-Free Communities members in Philadelphia. Photo: Nathaniel Doubleday/AFSC

PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

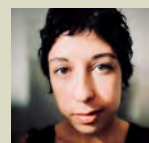
A MILESTONE FOR APARTHEID-FREE COMMUNITIES

For decades, the Palestinian people have faced Israeli occupation and systematic human rights abuses. In 2022, AFSC and partners launched the Apartheid-Free Communities initiative. Our goal: to build a worldwide movement committed to cutting ties with Israeli apartheid.

This year, we reached a major milestone. More than 1,000 communities have declared themselves “apartheid-free.”

These groups include Quaker meetings, faith and multifaith groups, nonprofits, student groups, businesses, and municipalities. Over the past few years, they have educated their communities about Israeli apartheid. They have advocated with lawmakers to end U.S. military assistance for Israel. And they have pushed their cities to divest from companies involved in apartheid.

For many of us, it’s easy to feel powerless in the face of Palestinian suffering. But the Apartheid-Free Communities movement shows that everyday people can make a difference. You can, too. ■



Samia Abbass
COMMUNICATIONS AND
ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR
U.S. PALESTINE ACTIVISM
PROGRAM

LEARN MORE:
APARTHEIDFREE.ORG

NEW POLL

SUPPORT GROWS FOR PEACE WITH NORTH KOREA AND CHINA

Turn on the news, and you’ll hear plenty of heated rhetoric about North Korea and China. But most people in the U.S. want something different: diplomacy, dialogue, and cooperation.

Every year since 2021, AFSC has commissioned The Harris Poll to survey U.S. public opinion on relations with North Korea and China. This January, we surveyed 2,085 adults.

The results are clear. Over half (55%) think the U.S. should formally end the Korean War by signing a peace agreement. Support for humanitarian access to North Korea also reached record highs. More than half agree that aid workers should be able to travel to the country without government restrictions. Most also believe the U.S. should lift sanctions that hinder public health efforts.

On China, nearly two-thirds of respondents want the U.S. to engage in dialogue to reduce tensions. That includes working together to stop the spread of nuclear weapons.

The U.S. public wants peace. It’s time for our elected officials in Washington, D.C. to listen. ■



Austin Headrick
ASIA REGIONAL ADVOCACY
COORDINATOR

LEARN MORE:
AFSC.ORG/NKPOLL

Friends in action

An interview with

BRIAN BLACKMORE
DIRECTOR OF QUAKER ENGAGEMENT



Q | What does it mean for AFSC to be a Quaker organization?

AFSC was founded by Quakers in 1917 as an alternative to military service. Quaker values shape everything that we do. We have a deep commitment to nonviolence. Even in conflict zones, we refuse to use armed security because we believe weapons have no place in our work. We also practice deep listening, rooted in silent worship. That enables Friends to be genuinely sensitive to the suffering of others. Combined with the belief in the inherent dignity of every person, those values are what sets AFSC apart.

Q | How does AFSC’s Quaker Engagement team support Friends in their activism?

We help Friends find meaningful ways to act on their values. That includes offering guidance on organizing, sharing advocacy resources, or even just being present at gatherings to listen and learn alongside them.

Quakers have long been on the vanguard of social change—from the abolitionist movement to women’s suffrage to anti-war activism. But activism is most effective when it combines passion with strategy. AFSC staff bring deep organizing experience and

connections with affected communities. We share that knowledge with Friends to help them work for social change more effectively. Last year, AFSC staff gave presentations at over 100 Quaker events.

Q | What has that partnership looked like in responding to Gaza?

Friends have shown up powerfully for Palestinians in Gaza. AFSC and other Quaker organizations released a joint statement denouncing the genocide that began in October 2023. At least 100 meetings have endorsed it. Each of these endorsements required careful listening, loving conversation, and care across differences.

In December 2024, Quakers started an affinity group as part of our Apartheid-Free Communities initiative. Members pledge to cut ties with Israeli apartheid and to oppose all forms of discrimination. Around 60 meetings have joined.

Q | How are Friends showing up for immigrant communities?

Immigrant justice is at the core of Quaker identity. Early Friends fled persecution in Britain to seek safety and live freely according to their conscience. This history has

shaped how Quakers understand and support immigrant communities today.

For years, Quaker meetings in Colorado and New Hampshire have been hosting undocumented families, with support from AFSC. Many Friends have taken part in Know Your Rights trainings and accompanying immigrants to ICE check-ins and court dates. Right now, we are creating a network of Quaker communities committed to immigration justice that mirrors the Apartheid-Free initiative. ■

Q | How can Friends deepen their work with AFSC?

Ensure you have a liaison in your meeting. Liaisons are our first point of contact when we mobilize Friends. We have about 300 liaisons now, and we’re always looking for more.

This is a moment that calls Friends to act on their deepest values. We are here to support you in that work.

MORE
AFSC.ORG/FRIENDS-ENGAGE

PROTECTING IMMIGRANTS COMMUNITY BY COMMUNITY

WE ALL DESERVE TO LIVE IN SAFETY AND PEACE—wherever we were born, wherever our journeys have taken us, wherever we call home.

But today, the Trump administration is working to undermine these values. Since taking office, the administration has detained and deported hundreds of thousands of immigrants. It has violently separated loved ones, deployed armed federal agents into neighborhoods, and created a culture of fear. These impacts are being felt in the U.S. and beyond.

But communities are refusing to accept this cruelty as normal. They are organizing. They are protecting one another. They are building power. AFSC is proud to stand alongside them. Here, four of our staff members share what that work looks like on the ground.

In San Diego NEIGHBORS WATCH OUT FOR EACH OTHER

BY BENJAMIN PRADO AND ADRIANA JASSO
COORDINATORS, U.S.-MEXICO BORDER PROGRAM

It's just past 6 a.m. in Barrio Logan, a working-class Mexican neighborhood in San Diego. We're on our usual volunteer patrol. We spot a white Ford Explorer with deeply tinted windows. Small lights inside hint it may be a government vehicle. Two figures sit in the front seats.

They're ICE agents.

Within seconds, we radio other volunteers. "White Ford Explorer. Turning onto Ocean View, heading south on 32nd Street." We start live-streaming on the patrol network's Facebook page. Hundreds of thousands of followers are alerted. By the time the vehicle realizes it has been spotted, the community has already been warned. That morning, the SUV drives away without making any arrests.

This is the work of community patrols organized by Union del Barrio. AFSC's U.S.-Mexico Border Program has supported this volunteer network for years. The patrols began in 1992 as part of a growing movement against police brutality. Over time, they expanded to monitor immigration enforcement. Today, these patrols operate in more than a dozen San Diego neighborhoods. Trained volunteers drive through their communities several days a week, often in the early morning hours when federal agents are most likely to operate.

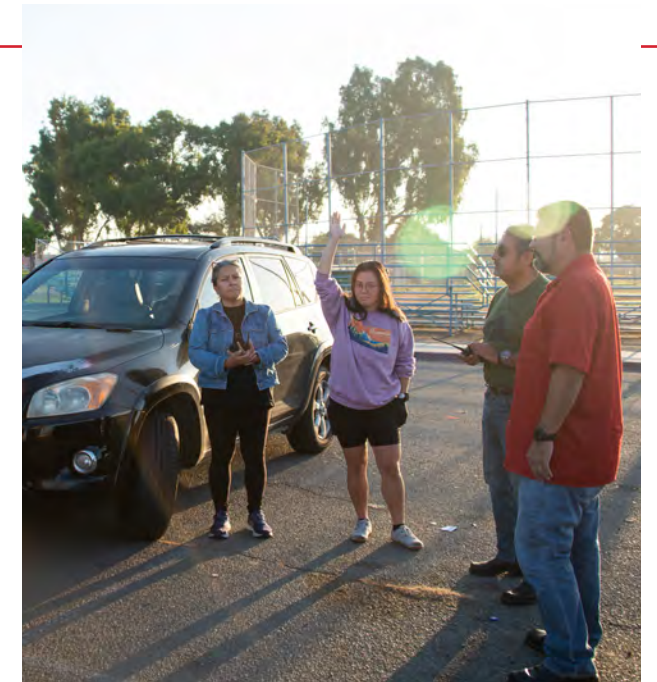
AFSC provides the network with crucial support: bullhorns, GoPro cameras,

and training. Our staff are long-term members who patrol at least twice a week. Many more community members serve as eyes and ears. These volunteers call a hotline when they spot enforcement nearby. Knowing there may be an operation in their area helps local residents make informed decisions. That includes deciding whether to stay home, have someone else take their children to school, or whether to adjust their routines.

The patrols have also prompted important changes at the local level. When volunteers spotted ICE entering a local elementary school last fall, they broadcast warnings to the public. Agents left without making arrests. And the incident led the school district to implement new protections and notify parents directly about ICE activity.

These patrols work because of something technology cannot replace: knowing and caring for our neighbors. Everyone has a role to play. Everyone can participate.

This is how we reclaim our neighborhoods and protect each other. It starts with rebuilding the social fabric of communities that have been under assault for so long. ■



AFSC staff and community members prepare to patrol a neighborhood for ICE and Border Patrol activity. Photo: Nathaniel Doubleday/AFSC

In Latin America

MIGRANTS FIND AID AND DIGNITY

BY MARCIA AGUILUZ SOTO
REGIONAL DIRECTOR, LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN

Last year, I met a father from Afghanistan who was trying to migrate to the U.S. with his family. He had been traveling north from Honduras with his pregnant wife and 5-year-old daughter. They had been robbed and lost everything. Yet they chose to keep moving—toward safety, toward somewhere they could live in peace.

Stories like theirs are why AFSC launched an emergency response to the humanitarian crisis facing migrants across Latin America. As the Trump administration has ramped up deportations in the U.S. and closed pathways to legal status, more people have been caught in impossible situations. Many are stranded midway through their journey. Others have been deported to countries they left many years ago, where they have no support.

Over six months, AFSC partnered with a dozen organizations across Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and El Salvador to reach more than 3,228 people. We provided food and other vital humanitarian aid, psychosocial support, and Know Your Rights trainings.

As one partner in El Salvador told us: “Beyond the material objects, these gestures are seen as signs of humanity, warmth, and closeness. People feel that we truly care.”

Alongside that support, we helped partners do something many had never done before: document migrants’ experience. We interviewed 364 migrants across the region. More than half of them had lived



in the U.S. for over six years. Many had left behind children, jobs, and communities they had built over decades.

Their stories revealed patterns of violence, detention, and displacement that demand a policy response. We turned those findings into a report calling on governments to end detention, restore asylum protections, and address the root causes of why people are forced to migrate. We’ve shared the report with allies, international human rights bodies, and members of Congress.

People have migrated for thousands of years. The question was never whether people will move. It’s whether we—as a global community—will build humane systems that protect them. With support from people like you, AFSC is showing that another approach is possible. ■

Migrants outside of a church in Costa Rica, where AFSC has provided humanitarian aid.
Photo: Rodrigo Henríquez

“Beyond the material objects, these gestures are seen as signs of humanity, warmth, and closeness. People feel that we truly care.”

In New Jersey

A HARD-WON VICTORY FOR IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

BY HENRY CRAVER
COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR, NEW JERSEY
IMMIGRANT RIGHTS PROGRAM

In the first weeks of 2026, the New Jersey State House hummed with an energy we hadn’t felt in years. Hearing rooms were packed. Survivor advocates, legal service providers, faith leaders, and immigrant community members lined up to tell legislators what we’d been saying for six years: New Jersey needs to protect its immigrant communities in law, not just policy.

That distinction matters. In 2018, AFSC and partners had successfully advocated for the Immigrant Trust Directive. The policy limits how local law enforcement can cooperate with federal immigration enforcement. But a directive can be withdrawn overnight. In a state where one in four residents is an immigrant and more than 500,000 are undocumented, we needed something that would last.

So we kept organizing. For six years, AFSC and more than 50 partner organizations in the New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice met with legislators and held community listening sessions. We brought directly impacted people to Trenton to share their stories.

“What really mattered to us was ensuring that the voices of those people directly impacted by immigrant enforcement were represented at the table,” says immigrant rights organizer Itzel Hernandez. “Our job was to make sure residents were aware this was happening and that they were comfortable speaking with legislators.”

That work paid off. In January, the legislature passed three bills that would enshrine into law more protections for immigrants in New Jersey. Then-Gov. Phil Murphy signed one of those bills into law.

Under the Safe Communities Act, armed federal agents are now barred from schools, hospitals, and courthouses.

That makes New Jersey safer for everyone. It helps ensure children can attend schools, patients can seek medical care, and survivors can access justice without fear.

Amended versions of the bill were later signed into law by the new governor, Mikie Sherrill. This was a real step forward, though the final versions of those measures fell short of providing the critical protections we had demanded.

But we are not done yet. We are still meeting with legislators, building coalitions, and making sure people most affected are heard by lawmakers.

Piece by piece. Bill by bill. Testimony by testimony. That’s how we build power and protect our communities. ■



AFSC staff and partners advocate at the New Jersey State House for more protections for immigrants.
Photo: Henry Craver/AFSC

Hope lives in Gaza

BY FIRAS AND SERENA
AFSC GAZA STAFF MEMBERS

More than two years of genocide have devastated the people of Gaza. Still, farmers are planting again. Children are laughing in learning spaces. Communities are gathering to heal.

We are grateful for your support of our relief efforts in Gaza. Thanks to your generosity, we have provided food, water, hygiene kits, and other lifesaving aid to more than 1 million displaced Palestinians—and so much more.

The need has not let up. A ceasefire was declared in October 2025. But as of this writing, Israel has continued its attacks and obstructed humanitarian aid from entering Gaza.

We will not step back. Our team on the ground is ready to meet each new need as it arises. Here is some of what we have accomplished together over the past year.

HELPING GAZA FARMERS RECLAIM THEIR LAND

Many of Gaza's farmers have seen their lands stolen, burned, and razed multiple times. Nearly 90% of farmland has been destroyed.

Today, farmers can only access about a third of damaged farmland. Yet where they can, they return. They plant again. They refuse to let their connection to the land be severed.

Through AFSC's emergency agricultural support program, we are helping 19 of these farmers restore what has been destroyed. We are providing them with seedlings, fertilizer, and pesticides and helping them rehabilitate damaged lands and greenhouses.

Today, these farmers are growing tomatoes, cucumbers, eggplants, peppers, and zucchini. Much of what they harvest is distributed to displaced families and to field kitchens that sustain communities.

Since July 2025, our team has distributed over 2,500 vegetable kits sourced directly from Gaza farmers, reaching more than 18,000 people. Every seed planted today is a promise that Gaza will live.



BUILDING COMMUNITY AMID THE RUBBLE

More than two years of genocide have left Gaza in ruins. Nearly every public building has been destroyed. But amid the devastation, life persists—and so does the need for Palestinians to gather, learn, and heal together.

AFSC funded the construction of an 80-square-meter multi-purpose hall in the Mawasi area of Khan Younis. This new community space is providing displaced Palestinians with something that has become very rare: a safe place to come together.

Since opening last fall, the hall has hosted workshops, meetings, and community activities. Students use it to pursue their studies online. Community members gather for trainings and support sessions. In a landscape where so little remains intact, this hall is more than a building. It's a place where community endures.



CHILDREN IN GAZA RECLAIM THEIR RIGHT TO LEARN

"This is the only place we feel safe. This is where we can finally be children."

These words come from children in AFSC's learning spaces in Gaza. These are children who hadn't seen a classroom in over two years. Whose days had been reduced to waiting in lines for water and bread. Who have lost parents, siblings, or other family members, as well as their homes.

Since mid-2025, AFSC has provided educational activities and psychosocial support to more than 1,800 children aged 6 to 12. And we plan to reach hundreds more.

The changes our facilitators have witnessed are profound. Children who were shy, withdrawn, or struggling are now confident and engaged.

At a recent graduation ceremony, children expressed themselves through music, dance, and theater. One parent told us that their children have "graduated as new versions of themselves."

Gaza's children have already faced the unimaginable. These spaces help return some of what has been taken—the chance to simply be children.



Photos (top to bottom): Amjad Al Fayomi, Waleed Abdelghafour, Amjad Al Fayomi

PROVIDING NOURISHMENT AND WARMTH DURING WINTER IN GAZA

For families living in tents and damaged homes, no season is easy. But winter is especially harsh, bringing cold, storms, and flooding. Our team was determined to respond to those needs. Working with local partners, we distributed winter blankets, clothes and mattresses and built tents for over 4,000 displaced people.

When meat returned to local markets in Gaza in January 2026, we found another way to help. We partnered with local kitchens to provide families with something they had been missing: a hot, nourishing meal. With the help of volunteers, we delivered meals to more than 9,000 people.

These meals of chicken and rice were more than food. They offered rare moments of comfort and restored some dignity amid more than two years of crisis. ■



PHOTOS THIS PAGE: AMJAD AL FAYOMI

OUR STEADFAST COMMITMENT

BY KERRI KENNEDY
ASSOCIATE GENERAL SECRETARY FOR INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

On Jan. 1, the Israeli government imposed new registration requirements on international organizations. These requirements can deny registration to groups that have spoken out against Israeli government actions. They're part of a deliberate effort to stop humanitarian work in Gaza.

Following these requirements would put our staff and partners in danger and violate our humanitarian principles. For these reasons, AFSC did not apply for registration.

We want to be clear: AFSC's work in Gaza and across the occupied Palestinian territory will not stop. We remain registered through the Palestinian Authority and will continue to provide lifesaving aid through our team and partners on the ground. Because we source locally, our model is less dependent on outside access than some others.

But much more help is needed. We join our partner organizations and the U.N. in calling for the removal of these restrictions.

Israel may be able to stop international staff at the border. But they cannot stop our solidarity.



DONATE

To support AFSC's relief efforts in Gaza, visit
[AFSC.ORG/PALESTINERELIEF](https://www.afsc.org/palestinerelief)

Healing as the first step toward peace

In East Africa, communities are rebuilding their lives after decades of conflict.



In South Sudan, women work to heal from trauma while learning skills, like embroidery, to generate income.

BY ZAINA KISONGO,
WITH MEGAN QUITKIN

Amina* is a young Somali woman who arrived in Dadaab, Kenya in 2011. The sprawling refugee complex is one of the largest in the world. It's home to hundreds of thousands of people—mostly from Somalia—who have fled war, famine, and persecution.

After witnessing her brother abducted by militia, Amina suffered recurring nightmares and flashbacks. She felt deep sadness and struggled to trust others. For years, she carried that weight alone.

Then, through counseling with AFSC partner Refugee Consortium of Kenya, Amina began to process her grief. She developed coping skills and began to reconnect with her community. "Nobody had helped me talk about this before," she said. "I feel so relieved."

Since 2013, AFSC and our partners have provided counseling and trauma healing to more than 2,300 refugees in Dadaab. For many like Amina, the support has helped them find their footing and begin rebuilding their lives.

In South Sudan, communities are taking similar steps toward healing. The world's youngest country is one where 84% of people need humanitarian support. An estimated 65% of women have experienced gender-based violence, most before turning 18. Mental health services are scarce. And stigma prevents candid conversations while inhibiting survivors from seeking services.

In 2019, AFSC partnered with local organizations to identify community members already committed to peacebuilding. Since then, young people, faith leaders, people with disabilities, and others have received training to process their own trauma and help others. They have also learned to train additional community members in trauma healing support. There has been a powerful ripple effect, and more than 2,000 peacebuilders have been reached.

Women are at the center of this work. Many are sole providers for their families. Alongside their healing, they participate in

savings groups and income-generating activities, like embroidery. That helps them gain financial independence. "Through the healing group and the saving initiative, I am independent and taking care of my children," said Monika*, a peacebuilder and mother of five.

Decades of civil war in Somalia have left many carrying deep trauma. In Mogadishu, young people are trained to peacefully resolve disputes in schools and universities before conflicts escalate. Elsewhere, survivors process trauma through poetry, storytelling, and theater. Other AFSC-supported programs equip youth to address community challenges. For example, youth work alongside elders and advocate for policy change.

Across South Sudan and Somalia, people are proving that healing is possible. They are also demonstrating that peace begins with each of us, and that we all have a role to play in community transformation. ■

* Names are pseudonyms.



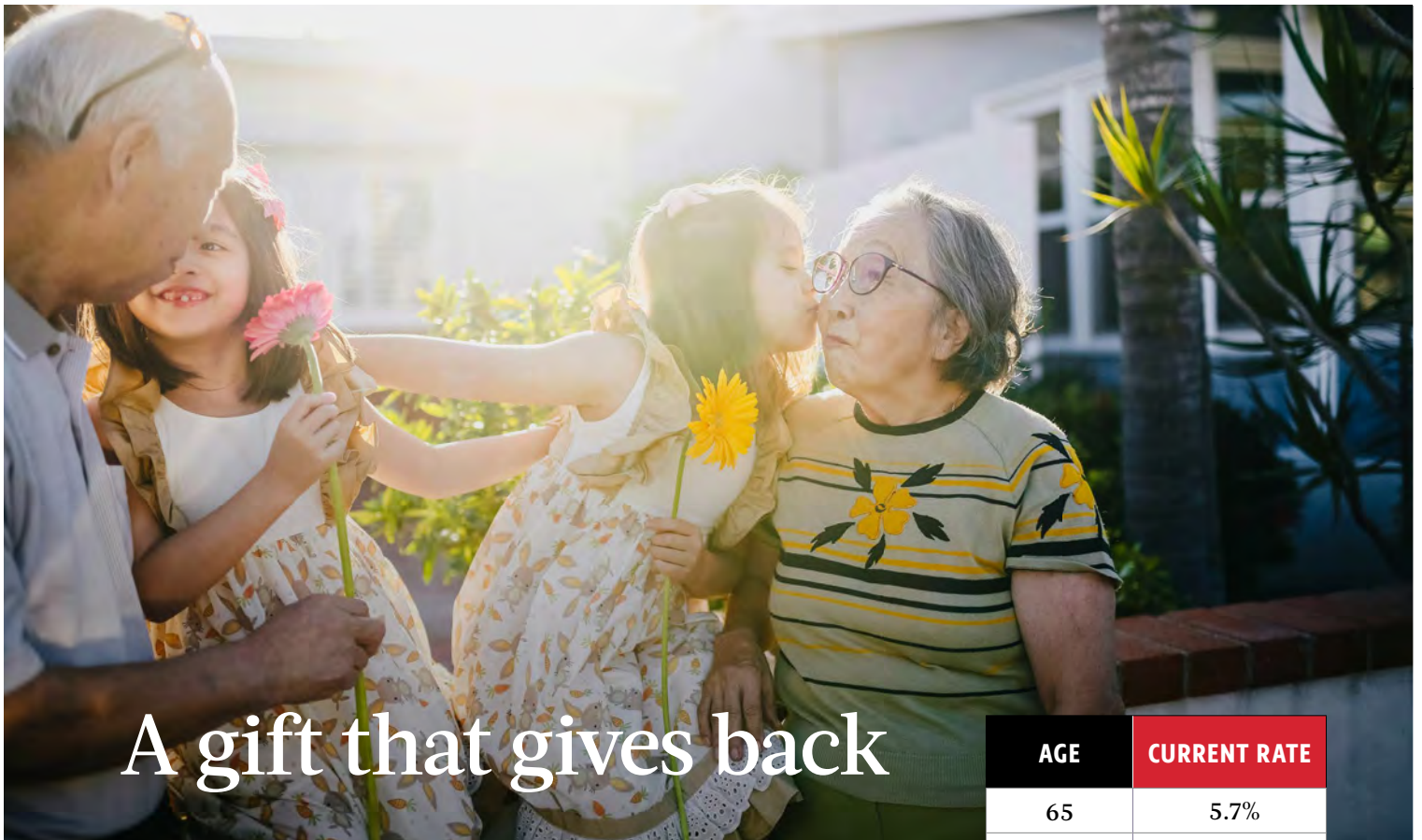
**American
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Quaker action for a just world

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Quaker Action

SPRING 2026 VOLUME 107 NUMBER 1



A gift that gives back

AGE	CURRENT RATE
65	5.7%
75	7%
80	8.1%
85	9.1%
90+	10.1%

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