



## **Why did you place this sign on your front lawn of your church?**

The two messages on our sign call for understanding and peace during a time full of conflict and strong emotions.

We believe more people of faith need to hold up the clarion calls for compassion and peace that are a part of world's major religious traditions, including Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

We believe Israel has a right to defend its territory and people and advance its own interests in a region fraught with conflict. We denounce the use of the phrase "From the River to the Sea" by protesters and stand with our Jewish friends and cousins in their belief that Israel has a right to exist and flourish in the Middle East.

We also believe that the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and West Bank have a right to self-determination and to organize themselves into a Palestinian state and determine their own future. We denounce the longstanding policies and regulations by the Government of Israel that have subjugated and restrained the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank and have contributed to the current tragic situation and conflict.

We believe there are religious extremists on both the Israeli and the Palestinian sides; extremists who are fanning the flames of hatred and war for the sake of their own

narrow-minded political and ideological agendas. This includes the leaders of Hamas on one side and the rightwing Israeli settlers (who support the complete removal of Palestinians) on the other. As a result of the extremist views of both sides of the conflict, hundreds of thousands of innocent people (mainly Palestinian civilians) may die of famine and disease in the coming weeks and months.

**We believe US and other major countries need to push for a ceasefire and a period of calm during which critical humanitarian aid can be delivered into Gaza, a narrow strip of land that is approximately the size of Manhattan where ~ two million Palestinians have lived.**

We also believe that more people across the United States and around the world need to support and promote moderate views of the conflict, views that emphasize the importance of peaceful negotiation and the cessation of violence. **We encourage all who read this statement to contact their Federal representatives and ask them to support a ceasefire, even if it means putting pressure on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the current Israeli government.**

We understand that Israel was viciously attacked last October and that they have a right to defend themselves. However we do not believe that Israel has the right to destroy the territory of 2 million Palestinians in a futile attempt to eliminate Hamas.

To date, Israel has lost 1,139 people and foreign nationals in the vicious attacks on October 7, (including 764 civilians and 375 soldiers). 248 people were kidnapped with approximately 100 Israelis still being held as hostages by Hamas. On the other side, the death toll in Gaza has surpassed 32,500 and another 75,000 have been injured (as of the end of March). Currently there are over one million Palestinians in danger of starvation and their cities and lands have been reduced to literal rubble.

Inspired by our contacts with Palestinian Christians in the Middle East, we encourage respectful dialogue, discussion and respect. We maintain there is another “side” to this conflict beyond just Israelis and Palestinians; one comprised of decent minded people of faith from different traditions around the world calling for a cessation of violence and a movement towards a 21st century peace agreement. This is neither anti-Israel nor anti-Arab, but rather anti-extremist and in favor of a reasonable and durable way forward.

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## INFORMATIVE RESOURCES & REFERENCES

DAVID MILIBAND,

PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

A brief interview with the President of the International Rescue Committee, David Miliband on Amanpour and Co. about the humanitarian crisis and potential for famine in Gaza.

LINK: <https://youtu.be/oyeKfjt7oJE>

### THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION

As a Unitarian Universalist congregation, it is appropriate to share this statement from the Unitarian Universalist Association (our national organization) regarding Israel and Gaza.

Press release:

LINK: <https://www.uua.org/pressroom/press-releases/uua-condemns-violence-urges-ceasefire>

Statement from the UUA:

LINK: [https://firstparishweston.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/peace-uua\\_statement.pdf](https://firstparishweston.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/peace-uua_statement.pdf)

### SABEEL, A PALESTINIAN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

This is a statement by a Christian group in Israel about the ongoing take-over / incursion (or invasion) of Gaza by Israeli Defense Forces. While Israel most definitely has the right to defend its territory and people, the question being asked now is if it has the right to kill tens and perhaps hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians while doing so.

This statement is published by Sabeel, a Palestinian Christian Community founded 40 years ago in Jerusalem. (Sabeel in Arabic means “way” or “source.”) The Reverends Judy and Harry Hoehler, Ministers Emeritus of First Parish, knew and worked with Sabeel for

many years and introduced Rev. Jeff to their work 24 years ago. The founder of Sabeel, the Rev. Naim Ateek, spoke / preached here in Weston many years ago. Peter Boulatta, a former Associate Minister to First Parish, is a Palestinian Christian and did work with Sabeel as well.

Press release:

LINK: <https://sabeel.org/a-call-for-repentance-an-open-letter-from-palestinian-christians-to-western-church-leaders-and-theologians>

“Call for Repentance” from Sabeel (PDF):

LINK: [https://firstparishweston.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/sabeel-2023.10.20-call\\_for\\_repentance.pdf](https://firstparishweston.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/sabeel-2023.10.20-call_for_repentance.pdf)

## TOM FRIEDMAN, THE NEW YORK TIMES

We also would like to share a recent editorial by Tom Friedman from The New York Times. Friedman is a longtime observer and analyst of the Middle East and his recent commentary and reporting have been some of the best of his long career. While he believes that Israel has a right to defend itself and protect its people, he believes its leaders are making a moral and strategic mistake in the way they are attacking Hamas in Gaza.

Opinion Editorial from New York Times

LINK: <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/12/opinion/israel-hamas-war-netanyahu.html>

## PEACE. SALAAM. SHALOM.

YouTube video of “Peace, Salaam, Shalom” by Emma’s Revolution

LINK: <https://youtu.be/KKlaqo4Uzr0>

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