

From: NEK Friends NEKFriends@proton.me

Subject: Continuing Dialogue among Quakers

Date: May 19, 2025 at 7:17 PM

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May 18, 2025

Dear Friends,

Letters from Northeast Kingdom and Midcoast Meetings regarding the choice of venue for New England Yearly Meeting's Summer Sessions 2025 have kindled dialogue among several Monthly Meetings about how they feel led to proceed and about the underlying issue of genocide in Palestine. Any discourse that centers Palestine and the ongoing war of annihilation there helps us see more clearly that we can no longer turn away.

Perhaps this timely article from UMass Amherst may shed new light on these weighty concerns and explain why Northeast Kingdom MM remains steadfast in the Meeting's original decision to share our grief with Friends throughout the region.

"Letter: UMass's authoritarianism and cowardice paved the way for Trump's attack. We must not ignore our institution's complicity" (posted May 7, 2025)

<https://dailycollegian.com/2025/05/letter-umasss-authoritarianism-and-cowardice-paved-the-way-for-trumps-attack/>

We cannot lose sight of the realities that led NEK Meeting to take the stand it did regarding genocide, university protests, police brutality, and UMass' complicity. This article provides more context, citing UMass as among the most egregious violators in the nation of the peaceful protest encampments last spring.

"UMass Shelled Out \$446,000 To Law Firm For Encampment Crackdown Review ~ The revelations come exactly one year after the university called in militarized state police officers to dismantle an on-campus pro-Palestine encampment, resulting in over 130 arrests"

<https://theshoestring.org/2025/05/07/umass-shelled-out-446000-to-law-firm-for-encampment-crackdown-review/>

Where, then, do we go from here? Here are potential actions that Monthly Meetings and the Yearly Meeting collectively might take:

1. Live into the spirit of the 2023 Minute to support the AFSC *No Way to Treat a Child* campaign and take action - more timely than ever during these 19+ months of children dying under bombs and from starvation. Let us feed the children or do our utmost to try.
2. Lobby constantly with all of our Members of Congress to restore US funding to UNRWA, the only truly dependable organization that has consistently and reliably provided humanitarian aid throughout Palestine and refugee camps for decades.
3. Call for an immediate Arms Embargo to Israel, as per Senator Bernie Sanders' sponsorship of Joint Resolutions of Disapproval (JRDs).
4. Use our Quaker voice in unity to decry the terrible weaponization of antisemitism to silence all dissent.
5. Consider joining the AFSC Apartheid Free Communities/Congregations. Two Vermont Meetings have already done so and five Vermont towns adopted it on Town Meeting Day in March of this year: About: <https://apartheid-free.org/about/> Pledge: <https://apartheid-free.org/pledge/>

6. At the very least, given recent revelations regarding the UMass circumstances, it is crucial to make a very strong collective statement to the university that we cannot and do not condone their actions.

AGAIN, this isn't about the leadings of one or two Monthly Meetings; it's how the Yearly Meeting can live into our Quaker testimonies and **together** address the genocide. Not as a workshop but as a principal focus at Summer Sessions. Without acting, we are all complicit.

By all means, let us gather in unity, and with a single voice say, "No More!"

PLEASE TAKE ACTION!!

In peace and friendship,

Susan Rhodewalt, Clerk of Ministry and Care Committee
Linda Schneck, Clerk of Meeting
Saloma Furlong, Communications Coordinator
for Northeast Kingdom Quaker Meeting
Barton, Vermont

cc: NEYM Permanent Board, NEYM Monthly Meeting