# Minute of Concern for Palestinians in Gaza (revised)

***Below is a minute similar to and inspired by the minute passed by Burlington Friends Meeting on July 10, 2018, tentatively revised by the NEYM Israel-Palestine Working Group.***

Friends’ concern for the sufferings of all peoples leads us to oppose the recent escalation of violence by the Israeli political establishment against the Palestinians of Gaza. The tragedy that began along the border of the Gaza Strip in late March, 2018 continues as of this writing (August, 2018). How should we as Quakers respond?

Gaza contains nearly 2 million residents in an area of 141 square miles. Israel imposes an economic cordon sanitaire around the region which results in nearly complete destruction of the Gazan economy, and 80 percent of Gaza’sresidents relying on international assistance. Travel in and out is sharply restricted by neighboring Israel and Egypt.

Since March 30, 2018, thousands of residents of Gaza, more than 80 percent of who are refugees or the descendants of those displaced during the establishment of Israel in 1947, began marching toward the barriers that keep them from work, travel, foreign markets, and their ancestral lands. While still within Gaza, they were met by Israeli snipers who shot into Gaza from embankments across the line. On May 14 alone, 58 demonstrators were shot dead, and 1,360 wounded with fragmentation rounds that often lead to amputations and permanent crippling. The deadincluded 6 children.

In light of the unarmed, non-violent nature of this civilian protest by Palestinians, the Israeli Defense Force’s premeditated and systematic shootings are a clear violation of international norms which forbid targeting noncombatants and require proportionality in the use of force, even in wartime. Clearly marked members of the press and the Red Crescent have been among the victims.

The United States is deeply complicit in these events. Since 1946, the U.S. has given Israel $134.7 billion in military and missile defense aid — $3.775 billion in 2017 alone. The weapons purchased are used to kill Palestinians. On April 6, the United States vetoed a UN Security Council resolution supporting the right of Palestinians to “demonstrate peacefully” and endorsing Secretary General Antonio Guterres’ call for an independent investigation into killings along the Gaza border.

On the day when 58 Gaza residents were shot dead by Israeli snipers, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was welcoming U.S. Middle East Advisor Jared Kushner, his wife Ivanka Trump, U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, and four U.S. Senators to thesymbolic opening of a planned United States Embassy in Jerusalem. The embassy will be on land declared neutral in the 1949 armistice agreement and considered by the United Nations to be in occupied Palestine.

Friends are witness to these horrific events. Historically, Friends have gone to great lengths to come down on the side of — and to fight the Lamb’s War for — justice. Yet we are complicit until we speak out forcefully in protest against what we see happening in Gaza: removing people from their land; confining those same people in what amounts to a concentration camp; denying them sanitation, adequate health services, and employment; and systematically killing them. When despair boils over into nonviolent protests, and protests are in turn met with violence sanctioned by mighty powers, can Friends in good conscience remain silent?

We urge Quakers in New England Yearly Meeting to demand that the U.S. government end all military aid to Israel and support international efforts to immediately end the illegal blockade of Gaza. We request that each Monthly Meeting address this crisis through prayer, discernment, and action.