

Developing greater awareness and inspiring action about Palestine-Israel—2023 NEYM sessions report by Quakers Advocating Justice for Palestine (QAJP)

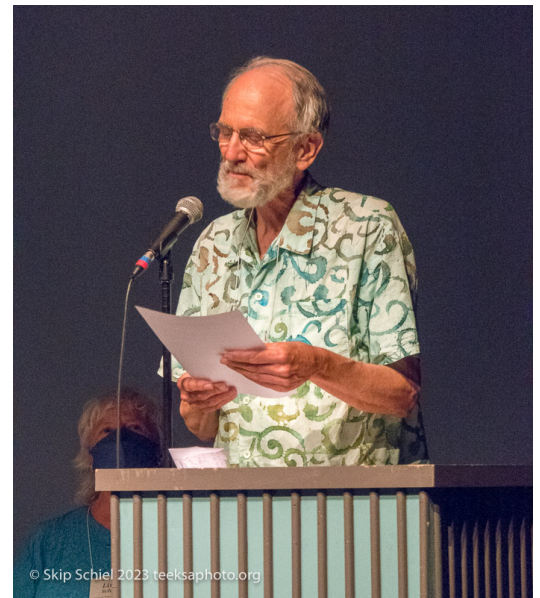
I write this report nearly two months after the two onerous slaughters and mass dislocation in Israel-Palestine, centered on Gaza and the southern Israeli communities bordering Gaza. **Plus the shooting of three young Palestinian men in Burlington Vermont, graduates of the Ramallah Friends School.** These events bring renewed attention to the region and the screaming urgency for solutions to the oppression and violence. Is the current pause—to release hostages from Gaza and Palestinian prisoners held by Israel—merely momentary or might it lead to some form of resolution, perhaps co-existence (as has largely prevailed for centuries until the ongoing Nakba which began in 1948). Our group's Palestine-Israel programming at 2023 New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM) sessions was full and I hope fulfilling.

The first of two personal highlights was when our yearly meeting embraced the American Friends Service Committee's (AFSC) **No Way to Treat a Child Campaign**, calling for conditioning military aid to Israel on honoring Palestinian rights. Approval came after hearing members of Northwest and Vassalboro Quarters in Vermont read multiple minutes written over these past four years. I sensed much relief in the organizers and audience when the minute passed easily and heartily:

NEYM's Minute 2023-506, "Support for the No Way to Treat a Child Initiative and Congressional Bill to Defend the Human Rights of Palestinian Children and Families"

Friends approved a request from the presenters that New England Yearly Meeting embrace AFSC's No Way to Treat a Child initiative by asking all monthly meetings to engage actively, as led, to encourage their Congressional Representatives to join Representative Betty McCollum (D-MN) to cosponsor H.R. 3103: Defending the Human Rights of Palestinian Children and Families Act." (Photo: Scott Rhodewalt reading

the proposed minute)



My second highlight was the participatory **workshop about lobbying for Palestinian rights led by Lauren Brownlee, Friends**

Committee on National Legislation's Associate General Secretary for Community and Culture. Attendees—online and in the room—were inspired to advocate justice for Palestine by writing postcards to their legislators. About five high school age young Friends attended the workshop in addition to a dozen or so adults.

We also organized **three lunch time “under the tent” discussions** about AFSC's growing Apartheid-Free campaign, FCNL's legislative actions about Palestine-Israel, and to hear from a recent visitor to the Occupied Territories, Devon Kurtz, one of the recipients of a travel grant from our Isaacs-Rawitscher Memorial Fund.



In one of these lunch sessions Jennifer Bing, AFSC's National Director of the Palestine Activism Program, joined us in an extended telephone call that helped us analyze NEYM being the first yearly meeting in the nation to embrace AFSC's No Way To Treat A Child. She also explained the new Apartheid Free campaign and provided support for the launching of the Be Bold Bernie campaign to persuade Vermont's Senator Bernie Sanders to travel to Gaza and the West Bank to observe conditions in these territories.

We **installed displays** along the walkways about Israeli apartheid, hosted a small **photographic exhibit** about the ongoing and relentless Nakba by Skip Schiel, and organized **an information table** in the main meeting place where we gathered nearly 20 names of people who wished more information about Palestine-Israel and QAJP activities.

Members of our group, Quakers Advocating Justice for Palestine, valued how we had many more meaningful conversations with Friends about Palestine-Israel issues and activism, this year in marked contrast to earlier summer sessions at Castleton.

Not only do we program events about Israel-Palestine for New England Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions but:

- we manage and promote our memorial travel fund (The fund will support New England Quakers traveling to Palestine-Israel to later report on their discoveries. More info about the fund and book on our home page.)
- promote the now even more relevant book, *Light in Gaza: Writings Born of Fire*
- support monthly and quarterly meetings in New England writing their minutes
- support each other in our various individual work
- supported our member Cliff Bennett when he visited Palestine-Israel last November for two months

- stay in touch with the Quaker Palestine Israel Network
- coordinate with the Israel-Palestine Resource Group of NEYM
- and we had a fabulous retreat at Woolman Hill for two snowy days in November.

(Retreat at Woolman Hill, photo by Mary Link-missing from the photo Anita Rapone, Martha Yager and Anne Remley)



Next year for QAJP? Not only might NEYM sessions be restructured, but with the potential for total restructuring of Palestine-Israel, my mouth gapes with fear, wonderment and possibility.

(More photos on our [website's main page - neym-ip.org/](http://neym-ip.org/))

—Skip Schiel, clerk of QAJP

No Way to Treat a Child Campaign of the American Friends Service Committee and Defense for Children International-Palestine - nwtac.dci-palestine.org

Israel Palestine Resource Group of NEYM- neym.org/israel-palestine-resource-group