



# Advice on attending protests on Palestine and Israel

16 November 2023

Attending public events such as protests and vigils shows those on the receiving end of violence that they are not being forgotten. It shows our leaders that we will keep on turning up and speaking out until policy is changed. And for Quakers, nonviolent protest is an important part of striving for peace.

There are regular protests and vigils being planned around the country calling for an end to the violence in Palestine and Israel and for an urgent ceasefire in Gaza. We know some Friends have felt hesitant about attending protests in recent weeks and have been asking for guidance.

Quakers in Britain have [responded in a number of ways](#) and are supporting the urgent call for a ceasefire, as well as our ongoing call for an end to the occupation and for human rights and international law to be upheld. In our [joint statement with Quaker agencies](#), we call on Israeli and international leaders “to firmly disavow dehumanising anti-Palestinian rhetoric and approaches that deepen painful divisions and politicise the current crisis”.

We are also deeply concerned about recent attempts to stop peaceful protest. Quakers have a long history of being present at and supporting the right to protest. This [blog](#) by Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness and Worship for Quakers in Britain, shares some of the history of Quaker protest, why the right to protest is important, and how we can defend it.

Friends wishing to organise their own vigil can find [guidance on the Quakers in Britain website \(PDF\)](#) on how to do so. Below we offer some ideas to reflect on and questions to consider when attending protests and marches:

- What are the organisers’ stated aims and do you feel happy that they are close enough to your own views? Are there other groups going that you would like to join up with?*

Quakers in Britain have [discerned positions on Palestine and Israel](#), and you might find it helpful to remind yourself of these. We use the concept of ‘principled impartiality’ to guide our work. This means that we don’t take a side or discriminate against anyone, but that we are not neutral in terms of calling for human rights and respect for international humanitarian law.
- What chants are you hearing and what placards are you seeing? What messaging are you comfortable with? How might you react and what actions might you feel safe to take if you witness antisemitism and/or Islamophobia on a protest?*

As with all protests, protests on Palestine and Israel attract people with a diverse range of opinions. You will often hear chants at a march and can choose whether to join in or not. You might, for example, hear calls to free Palestine “from the river to the sea” or see placards which name all the land of Israel and Palestine as “Palestine”. For some these calls and images are advocating for full and equal rights for Palestinians living from the

river to the sea (i.e. across all the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel). For some they mean the eradication of the state of Israel and can feel very threatening.

- *Who are you representing? Are you attending as an individual, with a Quaker group, or with another group?*

While Quakers in Britain hold corporate positions, Quakers as individuals hold a diverse range of views on, and connections with, Palestine and Israel. It's worth remembering that Quaker banners or placards will be seen by others as representative of all Quakers, and thinking about what messages are visible in the background of any photos you share, and whether these might misrepresent you or cause offence. You might also want to make your own placards, so that you are clear that your message is on display.

- *What does protest mean for communities in the UK?*

We know that communities in the UK are suffering too. The presence of these protests offers crucial solidarity to some and can feel threatening to others. The threat of antisemitism and Islamophobia in this country is real, with a sharp rise in attacks being reported in this country since 7 October. We can advocate for Palestinian human rights and protest against the Israeli government's response in Gaza, while also condemning the attacks on Jewish people both here and in Israel and extending our solidarity and compassion to Jewish communities.

- *Who are you attending with? Is everyone used to going on marches or is this new to some people?*

If you have arranged to go as a group and want to stay together, you could agree to buddy up, or agree to meet at a chosen point at the end of a march in case people lose each other. If you are organising a group, you may want to ask if anyone has additional needs that you can support with.

- *Look after yourself!*

It sounds obvious but while marches are often inspiring and energising, they can also be very tiring, physically and emotionally. Remember that you don't have to do the whole thing. The organisers will share a map of the route, and you can show up at the beginning, at the end or anywhere along the way! You may want to make sure you make time to debrief or chat to others afterwards to help process your experience before moving on to the next thing in your day.

We hope this is useful for you as you consider what action to take. If you would like to coordinate with other Quakers, we can put you in touch. You can contact us at [FaithInAction@quaker.org.uk](mailto:FaithInAction@quaker.org.uk). We would also like to hear about your experience, and you can share your stories of witness on the website here: [Quaker stories | Quakers in Britain](#)