

Open Letter: A Call for Hope

With the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

As inheritors of the Prophet Abraham's legacy, Jews, Christians and Muslims lay claim to one of the most special characters to walk this Earth, one who has the power to bring harmony and peace even at the most desperate of times.

For although the Prophet Abraham is no longer with us, the Blessed Land that he has left behind reminds us of those moments in history marked by mutual respect and goodwill between our peoples. The past provides us with both painful and happy memories which we would do well to reflect upon – historically, war and intolerance have been overcome by peace, understanding and hope. There is no reason why we cannot do the same today.

Yet we are not blind to the practical difficulties we all face to make peace a reality. It is not possible to build peace upon foundations of injustice and oppression. Likewise, it is not realistic that peace will be built upon complete happiness and every party achieving its idealistic dreams. Rather, peace will only be achieved if it is built upon compromise, trust and good faith. It is to these ideals that we call the followers of the Abrahamic faiths to aspire to.

We demand that violence against civilians - whether by state or individual actors - be stopped immediately, for in the words taken from an iconic statement made not long ago, "you are on the wrong side of history." Our shared past bears witness that the aggressor although winning battles has never won the war. Our shared past bears witness that the struggle of resistance to oppression is the single struggle that can never be suppressed. Our shared past as Jews, Christians and Muslims has given us enough individual examples when we have played both the roles of oppressor and oppressed. We know better than most how true these facts are.

Thus, in the light of two key ideals namely the sanctity of human life and the Palestinian right to self-determination, we call upon all parties involved in the struggle over Palestine to immediately cease violence and enter into negotiations to build a lasting peace upon justice for all. Specifically, our call is no more than what has been demanded by the UN: All Israeli attacks and incursions must cease, Israel must withdraw from all occupied territories, all borders must be fully open to humanitarian aid and lawful traffic, while all forms of attack against Israel, whether by Hamas or other parties, must come to a halt.

We also wish to add urgency to reviving the various solutions put forward by world leaders and politicians desperately trying to contain the anger within their own countries at the completely unacceptable situation we find ourselves in now. One such proposal widely supported by many of the world's nations is the Arab Peace Initiative (API). The API calls for the recognition of Israel as a legitimate state and an end of hostilities in return for abidance to UN resolutions: A complete withdrawal from lands occupied in 1967, a just solution to the refugee problem and the establishment of an independent Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, on condition that Jerusalem and its holy sites remain open to persons of all faiths.

We must also insist on an engagement of *all* of the Palestinian representatives in this process. Considering that the "Peace Process" over the last two decades has produced one disappointment after another, if the proposed political solution fails again, the Arab and Muslim peoples of the world will conclude that the political process is dead. This will have severe consequences not only in the region but worldwide. This is simply not an option.

Ultimately, it will not be the finer details of any peace initiative that will hold up progress on the path to peace, rather it will be the continued state of oppression and denial of basic human rights whether perpetrated by Israeli or Palestinian, be they Jew, Christian or Muslim. We hope that in the spirit of our close theological and historical ties our communities and all those in the Blessed Land will act upon the will of those desperate for peace and justice. Collectively, we must work for a better and more hopeful future.

Signed:

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