

14<sup>th</sup> August 2014

STATEMENT BY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF THE SOUTH LONDON INTER FAITH GROUP  
ON THE CURRENT HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN GAZA (72 people had added their names by 8<sup>th</sup> September.)

**Preamble:** - *We have issued this statement, as members and friends of an Inter Faith Group, principally out of humanitarian concern at the magnitude of the loss of civilian lives, especially of children, in Gaza. We do, in line with the respective teachings of our faiths, abhor loss of any human life regardless of their creed. We believe that the best way to resolve the conflict and pave the way for peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians is through getting all the principal parties round the table without preconditions and for all parties to observe international humanitarian laws and norms. We also state, unconditionally, that we are opposed to both anti-semitism and islamophobia and the use of language and actions that foster hatred rather than peace between the three Abrahamic faiths - Judaism, Christianity and Islam - which are most directly affected by the conflict in the Holy Land.*

It is with great shock and horror that we continue to hear of the rising number of civilians killed, injured and displaced in Gaza by the actions of the Israeli Defence Force.

We the undersigned would like to add our names to those of the many others who have called for the cessation of hostilities and the safeguarding of civilian lives and especially those of children. We ask both sides, Hamas and Israel, to observe humanitarian laws and norms in their conflict. But we do believe that there has been an overwhelmingly disproportionate response on the part of Israel to the firing of rockets by Hamas. We condemn especially the shelling of UN compounds and the loss of many innocent lives therein despite the co-ordinates having been provided to Israel by UN personnel. We believe it imperative, as the UN Secretary General has said, that those responsible for these attacks on schools and also hospitals be brought to account by the international community.

We urge the British government to take urgent affirmative action along with other members of the international community to facilitate a UN monitored permanent ceasefire which must include Israeli (and Egyptian) agreement to lift the blockade of Gaza, and Hamas agreement to cease its attacks on Israel. Whilst recognising the huge historical complexities, Britain and the international community must never give up the effort to bring all sides, including Hamas, to the negotiating table to work towards a peaceful ending of the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands and illegal settlements as required by international laws and agreements already in place.

In the words of Rabbi John Rayner: 'It is not enough to pray for peace. We have to work for it: to challenge those who foster conflict and refute their propaganda; to ascertain and make known the truth, both when it confirms and when it runs counter to conventional views; to denounce injustice, not only when it is committed against us but also when it is committed against others; to defend human rights, not only our own but also theirs; to insist that peace requires sacrifice – of pride, or wealth, or territory; to practice and promote the way of moderation, compromise and reconciliation; and to build bridges of respect and understanding, trust and friendship, across the chasms that divide humanity.'

We do pray that the ceasefire current at the time of writing will endure, so that humanitarian relief can be provided and negotiations towards a lasting peace can make some progress. And we resolve to deepen our friendships with our own neighbours of all faiths and none.

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|-------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Rizwan Alibhai | 5. Alan Gadd            | 9. Louis Kleinman        |
| 2. Sarah Thorley  | 6. Ebrahim Rashid       | 10. Ganesh Lall          |
| 3. Helen Bailey   | 7. Thelma Lewis         | 11. Diana Mills          |
| 4. Rashid Laher   | 8. Balbir Singh Bakhshi | (see continuation sheet) |

*Members and friends of the South London Inter Faith Group, for the sake of peace and friendship in the middle east and in all of our local communities with links around the world.*

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**Continuation sheet**

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|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 12. Ivor Smith-Cameron | 58. Mina Temple               |
| 13. Jane Wenlock       | 59. Danuta Smith              |
| 14. Bruce Bebington    | 60. Daphne Phillips           |
| 15. Terry Brown        | 61. Gisela Robinson           |
| 16. Louise Sugden      | 62. William Rhind             |
| 17. Mariette Ball      | 63. Mary Parilla              |
| 18. Eric Bramstead     | 64. Kishore Desai             |
| 19. Janet Dowling      | 65. Amber Bonham Carter       |
| 20. Safia Basith       | 66. Redwood Fryxell           |
| 21. Gyoro Nagase       | 67. Roland Hiller             |
| 22. Corinne Lever      | 68. Vidur Dindayal            |
| 23. Pat Price-Tomes    | 69. Betty Percival            |
| 24. Rosemary Shaw      | 70. Paul Sutherland-Waite     |
| 25. Tony McCaffry      | 71. Rosaleen Sutherland Waite |
| 26. Chris Beales       | 72. John Hunter               |
| 27. Anne Beales        |                               |
| 28. Marian Spencer     |                               |
| 29. Jane Westland      |                               |
| 30. Jane Morley        |                               |
| 31. Paula Watson       |                               |
| 32. Elizabeth Morse    |                               |
| 33. Kathy Robinson     |                               |
| 34. Rita Nunan         |                               |
| 35. Tony Page          |                               |
| 36. Constance Page     |                               |
| 37. Megan Warner       |                               |
| 38. Cicely Meehan      |                               |
| 39. Tini Brodie        |                               |
| 40. John Woodhouse     |                               |
| 41. Jo Harvey          |                               |
| 42. Bridget Andrews    |                               |
| 43. Sheila Henwood     |                               |
| 44. Patricia Bishop    |                               |
| 45. Dorothy Harkin     |                               |
| 46. Anthony Ottway     |                               |
| 47. Duncan Chalmers    |                               |
| 48. Vasantha Gnanadoss |                               |
| 49. Rosemarie Mallett  |                               |
| 50. Alison Williams    |                               |
| 51. John Key           |                               |
| 52. David Locke        |                               |
| 53. Elizabeth Locke    |                               |
| 54. Ken Riley          |                               |
| 55. Roger Hurding      |                               |
| 56. George Short       |                               |
| 57. Sheila Wharton     |                               |