

Quakers in Britain Peace briefing for MPs



Quakers believe that all life is precious. We have opposed war and promoted peace since the earliest days of our faith. We believe that genuine human security comes from investing in all the things that make us feel secure, such as healthcare, a fair economy, a healthy environment, peacebuilding and diplomacy.

The Middle East and Ukraine

Since October 7 2023, we have consistently called for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza by all parties, an unconditional release of all Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners, and for unrestricted aid to flow into Gaza.

In line with recent International Court of Justice (ICJ) rulings, Quakers recognise that Israel is maintaining a system of apartheid over Palestinians in occupied Palestine and that there is a plausible risk that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza. In July the ICJ also determined that Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory is illegal and must end "as rapidly as possible". It made clear that third party states are obligated to ensure they are not complicit in these violations. **We call on the government to immediately suspend all UK arms licences to Israel and review its trade relations with Israel.**

We question the cost – in terms of lives lost on both sides, environmental destruction, nuclear risk, and public funds – of trying to support Ukraine to a full military victory. **We call on MPs to prioritise diplomacy to seek a negotiated end to the conflict.** The government should work for a just and sustainable peace in both regions based on respect for international law and human rights.

Military spending and militarisation

We are very concerned by the government's ambition to increase military spending to 2.5% of GDP. In 2023 global military spending [rose](#) for a ninth year in a row, to a record \$2.44tn, yet this increased spending has failed to make the world feel any safer or more stable.

In fact, increasing military spending can make us less safe, by causing other countries to feel more at threat, fuelling arms races and escalating tensions. We question when military spending will be seen as enough, when NATO countries [already account](#) for more than half the world's military spending; spending ten times more than Russia.

We believe it is immoral to increase the UK's military spending when other areas of public spending – including measures to alleviate poverty – are subject to 'tough choices'.

Quakers want to see the government take all possible steps to rebuild confidence in the international rules-based order and in negotiations/treaties for arms control or disarmament.

Climate breakdown and human security

We are part of [Rethinking Security](#), a network of organisations promoting a 'human security' approach: one that values the security of ordinary people as well as the state; understands the UK's security as interdependent with the security of others; and seeks to build security in the long-term by addressing the root causes of insecurity.

Climate breakdown is a big threat to human security worldwide and cannot be resolved through military solutions. In fact, war and military activity are [major contributors](#) to emissions and ecological destruction. Climate breakdown can only be addressed through international cooperation to urgently tackle its root causes and deal with its impacts in a just way.

The government should redirect military spending to fund a fast and fair transition away from fossil fuels in the UK and to pay climate finance to support countries to cope with the impacts of climate breakdown. It should invest in peacebuilding to deal with any future climate-related conflict, rather than in military responses.

We look forward to working with you on these issues. To follow up please contact us at politics@quaker.org.uk.