

Quakers and Muslims draft



Introduction

The aims of *Quakers and Muslims* are to help to promote understanding among British Quakers about the Muslim faith, and some of the beliefs and values shared by Muslims and Quakers, to consider Islamophobia, and to suggest ways we could all work more closely together.

Quakers are invited to recognise the spirituality and good works of people faithful to other religions.

‘Do you work gladly with other religious groups in the pursuit of common goals? While remaining faithful to Quaker insights, try to enter imaginatively into the life and witness of other communities of faith, creating together the bonds of friendship.’¹

‘The ultimate goal of interfaith [is] to begin to share our vulnerabilities and doubts, gifts and discoveries, as the key to experiencing a search for Truth together.’²

We hope Muslim readers will also find some of these ideas useful.

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Each religion has central beliefs and values

There are many violent sections in the Old Testament, which Judaism, Christianity and Islam have all exploited, but today most believers emphasise positive values.

Jews believe in the Shema (Deuteronomy 6.4-5), which means active listening, obedience, and covenant faithfulness. 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.' The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) still inform basic law and morality around the world.

For Christians, Jesus repeated the Shema, adding 'with all your mind', and he also echoed Leviticus (18.19), 'and love your neighbour as yourself' (Matthew 22.37). Christians adopted the Nicene Creed in 325 CE.³ They tried to resolve arguments between monotheism and beliefs about the Trinity.

'We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father...We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified'.

The Nicene Creed reveres the Incarnation through the Virgin Birth, the Crucifixion, Resurrection,

Ascension and Final Judgement, and also Baptism. Many Christians now follow Jesus's teaching but not all the Creed beliefs.

Quakers are very unusual among Christians for having no Creed. Some Quakers choose to follow Jesus's teaching; some are non-theists or universalists, some are Jewish, Muslim or Buddhist Quakers. Quakers believe the Bible was written by fallible human beings. It is 'only a declaration of the fountain, not the fountain itself'.⁴ Growing numbers of Christians are rethinking and doubting the meaning of the Trinity and the resurrection'.^{5,6,7} This can draw us closer to Jewish and Islamic beliefs, though our liturgies and services are very different.

Historians tend to agree that some records from the Gospels and early scrolls of Jesus's words and deeds (the more 'socialist' ones) are reliable.^{8,9} Yet Jesus as God's Son and the Trinity, God's demand for a sacrifice, a sinless saviour, and other mysteries may have been invented to spread St Paul's version of Christianity to appeal to the Greek-speaking world by echoing stories of Greek gods. Jesus refutes some of these ideas, such as the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). He quotes Deuteronomy, 'The Lord our God is one Lord' (Mark 12:29).

Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world'. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life' (John 8.12). Most Quakers believe there is the light, or 'that of God' in everyone and we become more deeply aware of that through silent worship. 'We seek a gathered stillness in our Meetings for worship so that all may feel the power of God's love drawing us together and leading us.'¹⁰

'Dearly beloved Friends, these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by, but that all, with the measure of light which is pure and holy, may be guided; and so, in the light walking and abiding, these may be fulfilled in the Spirit, not from the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.'¹¹ The practical Quaker testimonies or living witness to Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality, and Stewardship (or Sustainability) are also central to Islam, as shown in the next section.

Islam and the Quaker Faith

By Shaykh Haytham founder of [Utrujj Foundation](#) and Ayesha Khan

What is Islam?

Two billion people, (about a quarter of the globe) are Muslim. Muslims believe in one God, whom they call Allah, which is the Arabic word for God and is also used by Arabic-speaking Christians.

Muslims believe that God is the Creator of everything, including the universe, and time, as well as humans and angels. He is unlike anything within creation. He is not part of creation, nor is creation part of Him. Nothing resembles Him. He has no partner, no children, no parents and no equal.

God is close to every person and knows what is carried within every heart. Muslims believe God's most prominent attribute is His mercy and that He is completely just. Anyone can turn to Him directly, at any time and in any language.

The word *Islam* means to willingly submit oneself to God. It comes from the same Arabic word as *salam*, meaning peace. Muslims believe that inner peace is found when human beings recognise their Creator and live according to His guidance.

Muslims believe that true freedom only comes when we can free ourselves from the pulls of desire, anger and resentment, as well as pressures from culture and society which take us away from what is pleasing to God.

Muslims believe that every human life has purpose. People were not created by accident or without aim. They were created to know God and worship Him. Worship includes prayer and giving charity, but reaches far beyond religious rituals. Caring for another person can be an act of worship when it is intended to be so. Even earning honestly or showing patience count as worship.

Muslims believe that God did not leave us without guidance. Indeed, He sent prophets and messengers from the time of Adam's creation, until the final messenger, Muhammad ﷺ who was born in 571 CE and

descended from Abraham, through his son, Ishmael. Muslims believe in all the prophets sent by God in the Jewish and Christian traditions, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and Job (peace be upon them all).

Muslims honour Jesus (peace be upon him) as the Messiah and one of God's greatest prophets. They believe in his miraculous birth and hold his mother Mary in great respect. However, they do not believe that Jesus is God or part of a Trinity. They believe that at the time of crucifixion, he did not die, but was raised to heaven alive by God, and will return to earth towards the end of time, as a just ruler. He will re-establish peace and justice, and his return will be one of the major signs that the Day of Judgement is near.



Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the word of God, which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ over 23 years, and remains unchanged today. It has been preserved in its original Arabic for over 1,400 years and continues to be memorised by people across the world and recited in daily prayer. The Qur'an invites people to reflect on creation and consider the meaning of their lives.

Prayer is at the heart of Muslim life. Five times each day, Muslims pause and turn back to God. These moments create space for gratitude and reflection. Muslims also give zakat (charity) to support those in need. They fast from dawn to sunset during the month of Ramadan, and if they are able and can afford it, they perform a pilgrimage to Makkah, known as Hajj, once in their life.

Islam teaches that all people come from one human family. Race does not make one person better than another, and wealth does not

determine human worth. Every person has dignity and will be held accountable before Allah for the way they lived.

Muslims believe that this life is temporary, and will be followed by judgement, when the truth will become clear and all matters will be resolved with perfect justice. No suffering will be ignored or unredressed. No act of kindness will be overlooked, even if nobody noticed it. God's love and mercy extend to all creatures, and He accepts the repentance of anyone who turns to Him with sincerity.

For Muslims, Islam is not a set of beliefs, but a way of living with awareness of God and a sense of purpose. For Muslims, the Qur'an and the example of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ provide the template for how to live the best life, extend kindness to others, as well as cope with the difficulties and challenges that are part and parcel of life.

On the Day of Judgement, humanity will be sorted into those who had true belief and did good deeds; these will attain eternal bliss in Paradise. And those who rejected faith and committed evil deeds; these will be doomed to Hell.

The purpose of revelation is to connect people to God, and to help people improve their conduct and develop their human potential. The wrongdoing of some Muslims should not be confused with the teachings of Islam itself.



The Five Pillars

The Five Pillars provide the basic structure of Muslim worship. The first is the *shahadah*,

through which a person affirms that Allah alone deserves worship and that Muhammad ﷺ is His messenger.

Muslims pray five times each day. Prayer interrupts the rush of ordinary life and turns the worshipper back towards Allah. Muslims stand before Him, then bow and place their foreheads on the ground. This physical act expresses humility before the Creator. The form of Muslims' prayer has remained unchanged since the birth of Islam.

Muslims who possess sufficient wealth give zakat (charity). This is an obligatory contribution from those who have wealth, to those who are in need. Zakat teaches that wealth is a trust from Allah and that the poor have recognised rights within society.

During Ramadan, Muslims fast from dawn until sunset. The fast is intended to develop self-control and gratitude. It also reminds Muslims of people who experience hunger without choosing it.

Muslims who are physically and financially able perform the pilgrimage to Makkah. Pilgrims gather in simple clothing before one God. Differences of wealth or social standing become insignificant.

These practices are not intended to be empty rituals. Prayer should make a person more conscious of wrongdoing. Fasting should strengthen the ability to resist harmful desires. Charity should weaken selfish attachment to wealth.

Revelation and the prophets

Muslims believe that God did not leave humanity without guidance. He sent prophets throughout history to remind people of their Creator and call them back to moral living. Over time, corruption and injustice spread through society and people turned away from God and morality, so prophets and messengers came to bring reform. These prophets included Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus (peace be upon them all). Their circumstances were different, but their essential message was the same: worship one God and follow His guidance.

Muslims believe that Allah revealed the Torah to Moses and the Psalms to David. Jesus received the original Gospel, known in Arabic as the *Injil*. Muslims believe that these revelations came from God, while the Qur'an is His final revelation and the criterion by which earlier religious claims are judged.

Muhammad ﷺ is believed to be the final prophet. Muslims love him and seek to follow his example, but they do not worship him.

Islam therefore understands itself as the continuation and completion of the message taught by the earlier prophets.

Values at the heart of Islam

Islam connects worship with moral conduct. A person's relationship with Allah should change the way they treat other people.

Truthfulness is central to the Islamic way of life. A Muslim should be honest in personal relationships and faithful to promises. The same principle applies to business and public responsibility. The Qur'an commands believers to uphold justice even when doing so is against their own interests.

Sincerity is equally important. An outwardly good action may lose its spiritual value when it is performed to gain praise. Islam therefore asks a person to examine the intention behind what they do.

Mercy is another defining quality. The Qur'an describes Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as a mercy to the worlds. He taught that people should show compassion towards the vulnerable and kindness towards animals. Mercy does not remove justice, but it prevents justice from becoming cruelty.

Islam also encourages forgiveness. This does not mean ignoring serious wrongdoing or denying the rights of someone who has been harmed. It means resisting the desire for personal revenge and leaving space for repentance.

Trust is treated as a serious responsibility. Property placed in a person's care must be protected. Confidential information should not be misused. Public authority is also a trust rather than a personal privilege.

Islam encourages cooperation in what is good, while forbidding cooperation in injustice. Muslims are expected to contribute positively to their communities and seek solutions rather than adding to harm.

Quality is also valued. The Prophet ﷺ taught Muslims to carry out their work with care. Excellence is not limited to explicitly religious acts. It should be visible in craftsmanship and professional duties.

Wisdom shapes the way Islam is shared. The Qur'an says: 'Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and debate with them in the most courteous manner.' (The Qur'an, 16:125)

This means that religious conversation should not be driven by the desire to humiliate or to win an argument. It should be honest while remaining respectful.

Islam also teaches moderation. Human beings have spiritual needs, but they also have physical responsibilities. A Muslim is not expected to abandon family life or withdraw entirely from society. The aim is to live within a balanced framework that gives every right its proper place.

Islamic principles have a vertical dimension, concerning the relationship with God, alongside a horizontal dimension governing relationships within society. Justice and dignity are therefore not additions to faith. They are among its necessary expressions.



Islam and the Quaker faith

Quakers in Britain describe their principal testimonies as simplicity, truth, equality and peace. They understand these values as convictions that should be lived.

Muslims will recognise much in this approach. Islam also teaches that belief must become visible through conduct. Faith that never affects behaviour has failed to achieve its purpose.

Truth

Quakers seek to live according to the truth they recognise and have a long tradition of speaking truth to power.

Islam also requires courage in upholding truth, even if that means conveying the truth to a tyrannical leader. The Qur'an commands believers to be witnesses for justice even when the truth is uncomfortable. At the same time, Muslims are taught that truth should be communicated wisely. Honesty does not require harshness.

Simplicity

Quakers are concerned about excess and seek to make room for what truly matters.

Islam does not forbid comfort or lawful enjoyment. It does warn against extravagance and waste. A Muslim may own possessions without allowing those possessions to control the heart.

Prayer interrupts constant activity. Fasting limits consumption for part of the day. Zakat prevents wealth from circulating only among those who already possess it.



Equality

Quakers affirm the equal worth of every human life.

Islam teaches that every person comes from the same human origin and was created by the same God.

'O humanity, We created you from a male and a female and made you into peoples and tribes

so that you may know one another.' (The Qur'an, 49:13)

Race does not make one person better than another. Wealth is not a measure of worth before Allah. Men and women are equally accountable to Him.

In his Farewell Sermon, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ rejected racial superiority and reminded his listeners that their Lord was one and their human origin was one. Utrujj presents this as a universal principle of human equality.

Peace

Quakers are widely known for their peace testimony and their rejection of violence.

Islam also gives peace a central place. Muslims greet one another with *assalamu alaykum*, meaning 'peace be upon you'. Reconciliation is praised, and aggression is forbidden.

There is an important difference. Islam permits proportionate defence against aggression, so it does not generally teach absolute pacifism. However, the use of force is morally restricted. Innocent people may not be deliberately harmed. Hatred must not lead to injustice.

Muslims and Quakers may therefore reach different conclusions about armed force. They can still share a commitment to resisting cruelty and seeking a peace founded upon justice.

Jesus in Islam

Jesus, known in Arabic as Eesa, is deeply honoured in Islam.

Muslims believe he was the Messiah and one of Allah's greatest prophets. They believe he was born miraculously to Mary without a human father. He performed miracles by Allah's permission and called the Children of Israel to worship God.

Muslims do not believe that Jesus is God or the son of God. They also reject the doctrine of the Trinity. The Qur'an states:

'The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of God and His Word conveyed to Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers, and do not say, 'Three'.' (The Qur'an, 4:171)

Muslims believe Jesus was not killed or crucified, but was raised by God. The Qur'an does not identify another individual who was crucified in his place. It says that the event was made to appear so to those involved. Muslims also believe Jesus will return before the end of time.

These teachings differ from the beliefs of many Christians. Respectful dialogue allows both communities to state their beliefs clearly without caricaturing the other.

Passages from the Qur'an for reflection

The Qur'an frequently addresses people of earlier scripture. At times it identifies theological differences, while elsewhere it calls for common ground:

'Say, People of the Book, let us arrive at a statement that is common to us all: that we worship none but God.' (The Qur'an, 3:64)

The Qur'an also explains the purpose of human diversity:

'We made you into peoples and tribes so that you may know one another.' (The Qur'an, 49:13)

It affirms the breadth of God's mercy:

'My mercy encompasses all things.' (The Qur'an, 7:156)

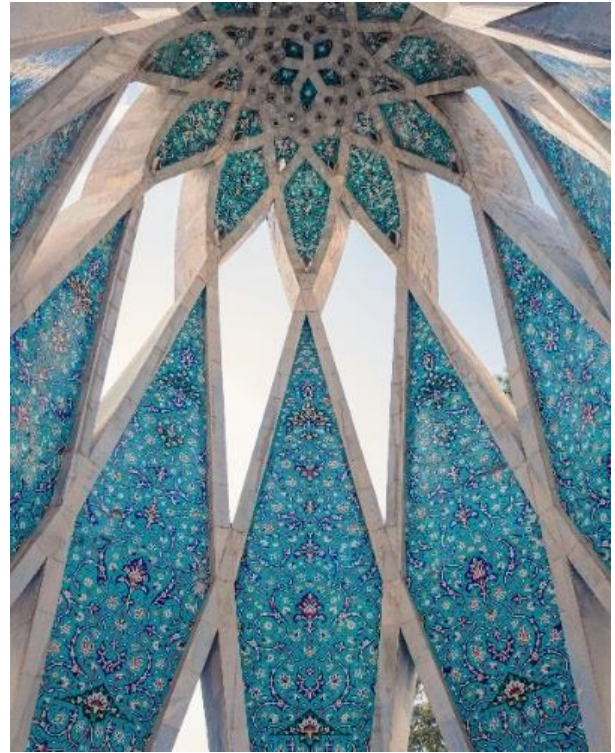
It offers hope to those who have made mistakes:

'Do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Allah forgives all sins. He is truly the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.' (The Qur'an, 39:53)

The Qur'an also stresses the sanctity of human life. It teaches that unjustly killing one person is comparable to killing all humanity, while saving a life is comparable to saving humanity as a whole.

By the Sufi poet Rumi

The spring of love arrives
to transform the dust into a garden.
The call is heard from the heavens
To bid the wings of soul to fly.
The sea becomes filled with pearls.
The dry land received the water of life.
The stone becomes a ruby,
And the body becomes all soul.



George Fox and Muslims

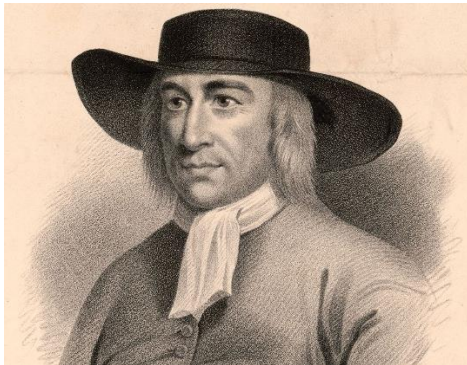
Quakers have very long associations with Muslims. Founding Quaker George Fox believed that all Muslims (often called Turks and Moors) possess the true Light, which 'lights everyone that comes into the world' (John 1:9).^{12,13} Muslims might achieve salvation, he thought, when they are guided by that Light even if they know little of Christian doctrine.

Early Quakers believed God made a covenant with all people, and Quakers travelled to Ottoman lands to declare this message during the 1650s and early 1660s. Mary Fisher went to the Caribbean, America, and Turkey, where she talked with Sultan Mehmed IV.

Fox's views on Islam are shown in two Declarations he wrote to leading Muslims in 1680 and 1688. His other Islam-related texts have been lost. Fox read the 1649 English translation of the Qur'an and valued its divine revelation and promotion of the Christian Bible.

In his first declaration, Fox quoted the Qur'an 30 times showing knowledge of its major themes. He criticised cruel Turks who had enslaved Quaker sailors and travellers in North Africa, as well as an aggressive Sultan, for failing to keep Muslim high moral standards. He asked, 'What will you say in

the day of Judgement, when the Prophets and your own Alcoran [Qur'an] will be against you?' Like Muslims, Fox seemed to fit the Qur'an with the biblical prophets and the law of God.



George Fox

Fox did not share Muslims' belief that Muḥammad was God's final prophet (33:40). Instead, Fox thought that, continually, 'everyone receiving the Light which comes from Christ, shall receive the spirit of prophesie, whether they be male or female'. He encouraged Quakers to learn Arabic to translate some Quaker tracts and distribute them in Ottoman lands, 'to direct them to the Spirit and Grace of God within them, which they have from God, in their hearts'.

He wanted Muslims to recognise that Quakers are different from other Christians, in their religious practices and moral standards. Many Muslims avoid images of any living beings to avoid idolatry, and Fox connected this to Quakers' avoidance of pictures and statues. Quakers, he said, do not worship any 'Representation, Image or Likeness', unlike many other Christians. Fox wanted Friends by their 'lives and conversations and words' to preach 'righteousness, and holiness, and godliness' to the 'Turks and Moors', and to have respectful concern for their good opinion of Quakers.

Fox defended Muslims' freedom to practise their religion and to build mosques alongside churches, synagogues, pagan and other meeting places in Britain, as part of pleading for religious freedom for Quakers and criticising intolerant Christian rulers. He praised the tax system in Turkey that showed religious diversity could be allowed within political stability, unlike the enforced tithes in England. (Many Quakers were imprisoned for

not paying one tenth of their income to the Church of England.) Fox also admired Muslims for not forcing their religion on others (though he knew about conflict between Muslim sects), and he criticised Christians who tried to compel Quakers to abandon their faith. Fox emphasised that all religions, Christian, Muslim, Judaism and others, should be based on the direct experience of the Spirit which was beyond physical outward forms.



A woman speaks at a 17th Century Quaker Meeting¹⁴

Early Quaker faith was apocalyptic, with belief that the world would soon end. Quakers thought all other religions, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, were deficient, human-made forms that would soon pass away. Without each individual's obedient response to the Light of Christ, which Quakers believed dwells in us all from birth, people would face the impending judgement and wrath of God, regardless of their outward faith. Early Friends believed that people of all faiths could make genuine, obedient responses to the indwelling Light.¹⁵

Quaker faith in our inner light refutes traditional Christian beliefs in original sin and evil in children. These beliefs ignore Jesus's saying, 'Unless you turn and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew, 18.3). Islam too sees children as innocent, a profound divine blessing and a sacred trust (*Amanah*). Muhammad ﷺ cherished and played with children, gently, patiently and respectfully. In Islam, every child is born pure, sinless, with innate *fitrah* to recognise and worship the Creator.^{16,17}

Fox's fresh ideas about Islam and Muslims have shaped Quakers' views for centuries. Some

readers criticised him for being too close to Muḥammad and for similarities between his own Journal and the Qur'an.



Palestine

For many centuries, Palestinian Muslims, Jews and Christians usually lived together amicably.¹⁸ Children played together and neighbours often shared in celebrating one another's festivals. Major disruptions included the plundering English Crusades through the 12th to 15th Centuries. The ruling Ottoman Empire lasted from 1299 to 1922.

When the British Empire invaded Palestine in 1917, of the 757,182 Palestinians, 80% were Arabs, 11% Jews and 9% Christians.¹⁹

Origins of the current war in Gaza can be traced to anti-Jewish and colonial policies in Britain's 1917 *Balfour Declaration*. This set out a 'national home for the Jewish people' in Palestine, to encourage Jews to leave Britain. The British also wanted a power base close to the Suez Canal and Middle Eastern oilfields. *Balfour* is among many examples around the world of British colonialism that created arbitrary states and borders, which have led to endless disputes and wars. By 1939, about one third of the 1.5 million Palestinians were Jews. The World War II Holocaust forced many more Jews to seek safety in Palestine.

The United Nations adopted a Partition Plan for Palestine in 1947, and recognised Israel as a UN member state in 1949.

The Nakba, Arabic for catastrophe, was the violent ethnic cleansing and dispossession of up to one million Palestinian Arabs by Israeli forces before, during and after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. Up to 15,000 Palestinians were killed, and over

530 villages were destroyed.²⁰ Survivors, who had lost family members, land, homes and national identity, fled to safer areas. Some went to Jordan or Syria, others to East Jerusalem, the West Bank or the Gaza strip, which Ilan Pappé has called 'the biggest open-air prison on earth'.^{21,22}

The first intifada (uprising or throwing off) began in 1987 when Palestinians claimed their rights to their homes, land and water. The second intifada was in 2000. In 2002, Israelis started building the wall and increased the roadblocks and checkpoints. These stop many Palestinians' essential daily activities and their access to work, schools and healthcare. Thousands more Palestinians were killed in Gaza in the decade before 2023.²³

On 7 October 2023, Palestinian Hamas violently attacked a group of Israelis; 1194 of them were killed and 254 were taken as hostages.²⁴ From that date to 29 June 2026, Zionists have killed 73,066 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and injured another 173,514.^{25,26} Thousands more bodies are buried under rubble. Since the 'ceasefire agreements' on 10 October 2025 and 30 June 2026, attacks have continued with 1,053 Palestinian deaths and 3,406 injuries.²⁷

Over 43,000 Palestinians, among them nearly 10,000 children, need long-term care for amputations, burns, or spinal or brain injuries.²⁸ Only 19 of Gaza's 36 hospitals remain. They are only partly functioning and cannot obtain the resources they urgently need.²⁹ Malnutrition, infectious diseases, snakes and rat-infested rubbish and lack of water increase the deathrates. Almost 90% of Gaza's water system has been destroyed.³⁰

Palestinians have been very highly educated, but in deliberate scholasticide, nearly 97% of schools have been destroyed.^{31,32} By May 2024, all 12 universities in Gaza were partly or completely destroyed, with other colleges and libraries.³³

The aim is to delete all memories of Palestinians' history, their ancient archaeological sites and scrolls, everything built and made over millennia. Zionist writers, educators and journalists detach Palestinians from their history.³⁴ By 2025, Zionists

had destroyed a million of the 1.1 million olive trees in Gaza.³⁵



A staircase

Palestine's West Bank and East Jerusalem

By 2026, over 700,000 Israelis live in around 160 illegal settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.^{36,37} In June 2026, some leading Israelis protested against their Government's support for illegal settlements and ethnic cleansing there, where 7,468 Palestinians have been killed since 2008.^{38,39,40}

Quakers in Palestine

British Quakers have been involved for over 150 years in 'the Holy Land' where Jesus once lived. Ramallah Friends School in the West Bank opened in 1869.⁴¹ Palestinian Quakers still gather at their Meeting House in Ramallah.⁴²

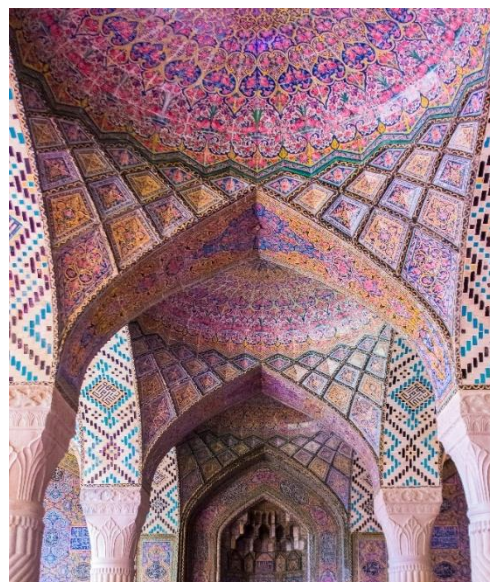
British Friends worked for peace and to relieve poverty throughout the 20th century. AFSC (American Friends Service Committee) set up the first refugee camps in Gaza in 1949. In 1974, AFSC opened the Quaker Service Information and Legal Aid Office in East Jerusalem.⁴³

Since 2003, Quakers in Britain have managed the UK & Ireland branch of the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI).^{44, 45} The programme supports ordinary people to

serve as human rights monitors, or Ecumenical Accompaniers, in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. They accompany vulnerable communities and Palestinians and Israelis working nonviolently for peace.^{46,47, 48,49} When they return home, EAs speak and witness about advocating change, peace and justice.^{50,51}

In 2011, Quakers in Britain agreed to boycott products from the Israeli illegal settlements in the West Bank, as a nonviolent move for peace for Israelis and Palestinians.⁵²

In 2014, deeply concerned about continuing conflict, Yearly Meeting Gathering called on the UK government to take more concerted action for peace in Palestine and Israel, to recognise the state of Palestine as much as the state of Israel.⁵³



In 2018, Quakers became the first British church to announce it would not invest in any companies that profited from the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and to recognise that Israel maintains a system of apartheid over all Palestinians.⁵⁴

In 2025, Quakers were the first UK church to recognise, with the United Nations International Court of Justice, 'a plausible risk of genocide in Gaza'.⁵⁵ Quakers continually advocate for an end to violations of international law and the unlawful occupation of Palestine, and for a just peace for all Palestinians and Israelis.

In 2025-2026, Quakers have been among the silent demonstrators in London and elsewhere who hold placards that support Palestine Action, which the Government has proscribed.⁵⁶ Some

have been arrested and imprisoned. They protest against the Israel-Palestine war and also against the Government closing down on civil liberties and everyone's right to protest peacefully.⁵⁷

In May 2026 at Yearly Meeting, the peaceful protest group Quaker Palestine Solidarity reviewed threats to protest rights in the UK.⁵⁸ They reaffirmed the Quaker presence at national marches, supported local action, and defended the right to protest under increasingly restrictive laws, concluding: 'witnessing for peace is a core part of Quaker faith'.

There are two powerful echoes from early Quaker times.⁵⁹ One is Quakers still protesting peacefully and being imprisoned for their moral beliefs. The second is the current work to defend independent jurors, who can decide according to their conscience not by judges' edict.⁶⁰

Juries' independence, that is now being threatened, was first established in 1670 after William Penn and William Mead were arrested for preaching at a Quaker meeting in London, breaking the law that prohibited religious gatherings outside the Church of England. The jury kept finding them 'not guilty', despite being imprisoned, starved and fined for disobeying the judge. After Edward Bushel, a juror, refused to pay the fine and filed a lawsuit, the Court of Common Pleas ruled that juries cannot be punished for their verdicts, and jurors must be free to make decisions based on their own convictions.⁶¹



*A Silent Quaker Protest Meeting outside Scotland Yard, London Police HQ, 2026.*⁶²

Quakers and Muslims in Asia and Africa

Today, about 93% of people in the 22 Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa are Muslim. Up to 85% of all Muslims live in Asia, such as in Indonesia, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, or in Europe and other continents, and Muslims make up about one third of the people in sub-Saharan Africa.⁶³

A Quaker first visited Asia in 1657.⁶⁴ Quakers have worked there for peace and reconciliation since the 19th Century, mediating between the British, Muslims and Hindus. They supported Ghandi's Indian Independence movement that worked closely with Muslims.

Horace Alexander, a Quaker working in India for the British Government with Gandhi, and with another Friend Agatha Harrison who supported Asian women's groups,⁶⁵ said, 'Christian Quakers and Quaker-minded men [sic] of the East are brought very near each other as they go deep and forsake the exterior trappings to listen to the same voice, away from names and labels'.

Quakers worked on famine relief in Bengal during World War II.⁶⁶ In the 1950s, Quakers worked to ease tensions following the Partition of India and Pakistan, such as through their Student Seminars.⁶⁷ They partnered with NGOs in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal.⁶⁸ Today, the Quaker South Asia Interest Group (QSAIG) supports building a peaceful, just and sustainable world.⁶⁹

Nearly half of all Quakers and attenders in the world live in Africa with up to 450,000 in Kenya. More than 85% of Kenyans are Christians and about 10% are Muslim.⁷⁰ There are many Quaker schools in Kenya, Rwanda, and Burundi, mostly now state-funded though retaining Quaker values. There is a small Quaker meeting in Muslim-majority Nigeria. Some past Quaker activities have been criticised as too colonial.⁷¹ Today, Quakers aim to be guided by the communities they try to help.⁷²



Islamophobia

One aim of this pamphlet is to show how Quakers oppose Islamophobia as they oppose Anti-Semitism.^{73,74} The Muslim Council of Great Britain definition, with Parliamentary support, is 'Islamophobia refers to prejudice, discrimination, or hostility directed at Muslims or those perceived as Muslim. It is rooted in racism and targets expressions of 'Muslimness'.'⁷⁵ It can target Sikhs, Hindus and others who are assumed to be Muslim. Most Muslims are people of colour, and racism complicates Islamophobia.

Like anti-Semitism,⁷⁶ Islamophobia can be religious, cultural or political bigotry. Increasingly, it is seen as 'normal'. Baroness Warsi, a former Conservative minister, warns it is too socially acceptable and 'dangerously out of control'.⁷⁷

Muslims are widely feared as terrorists fighting in the name of Islam. Their countries, like most other ones, have long military histories. Muslim nations were defined as terrorist when they fought in self-defence against centuries of attacks, invasions and plundering by other nations.⁷⁸

Dangerous Islamic terrorist groups such as ISIS, Al-Qaeda and Hamas are widely feared. Their histories are complicated. They have been supported by Western governments, at least in their early years, in colonial divide-and-rule politics.⁷⁹

Like Sinn Féin in Ireland, Hamas has a military wing, and a political wing elected to govern Gaza. Peace could only begin in Northern Ireland through negotiations with Sinn Féin, and these are advocated with Hamas.⁸⁰ The complex

histories and present raise many questions for Quaker discussions about peace.

In Britain, there are very few or no attacks by Islamic terrorists each year, but thousands of individual hate crimes against Muslims are recorded.⁸¹ Grooming gangs, that sexually abuse girls, tend to be seen as all Muslim, but data are 'unreliable' and many other groups are involved.⁸²

In 2026, anti-Muslim sentiment and violence in the UK 'have been skyrocketing',⁸³ with daily stabbings and fire-bombings, rarely reported in the mainstream news. 'During the year to March 2025 in England and Wales, 2,873 anti-Semitic incidents were reported, 29% of all reported religious hate crimes. There were 4,478 anti-Muslim incidents, 45% of all reported religious hate crimes.⁸⁴ These shocking figures under-report the real incidence. Many crimes are not reported to the police or not recorded by them, and religious crimes partly overlap with race hate crimes. There were 82,490 reported race hate offences during that year, 71% of all reported hate crimes.

Islamophobia and Muslim suffering in wars and major conflicts in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Yemen, Somalia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso, Myanmar and Afghanistan are very under-reported in the British media,^{85,86,87} even by the supposedly independent BBC.⁸⁸ Directly or indirectly, Britain supports many of these wars.⁸⁹ Deathrates in majority Christian Ukraine are highlighted in the news; far higher deathrates in Palestine are routinely ignored, as are monthly peaceful pro-Palestine marches in London that have involved up to half a million people.⁹⁰

During 2016-2019, the *Guardian* published 1,215 articles about anti-Semitism in the Labour Party, but only 194 articles on 'the much more serious problems of Islamophobia in the Conservative Party'.⁹¹ By 2026, peaceful protest was being redefined as hate crime, with many pro-Palestine supporters being punished, even imprisoned and sent death threats.^{92,93}

Some critics dismiss all Muslims for being opposed to the rights of women, LGBTQ people and religious minorities, both in Britain and in

Muslim countries where penalties for homosexuality and adultery include imprisonment and death.⁹⁴ In Saudi Arabia, for example, 33 offences warrant the death penalty and, in 2025, 356 people were executed.⁹⁵

Extreme Muslim laws, such as on the death penalty, mainly come from Sharia law and the *Hadith*, later traditions than the Qur'an. The Qur'an emphasises restitution, forgiveness, justice, mercy and repentance, with much higher standards of justice for law courts than tend to be practised.⁹⁶

Repressive laws in Muslim countries are also partly shaped by their long European colonial histories.^{97,98} Many despotic Muslim rulers keep control with support from Western powers.⁹⁹ There are constantly large popular protests against these governments' corrupt, repressive, sexist regimes.¹⁰⁰ In majority Christian countries, some governments, religious leaders and individuals from all faiths still promote repressive sexist and homophobic policies. Yet millions of believers in all the world's religions have high moral ideals, and work hard to understand and practise them and to resist oppression.¹⁰¹ And many Muslim women proudly wear the hijab, feeling empowered and liberated.¹⁰²

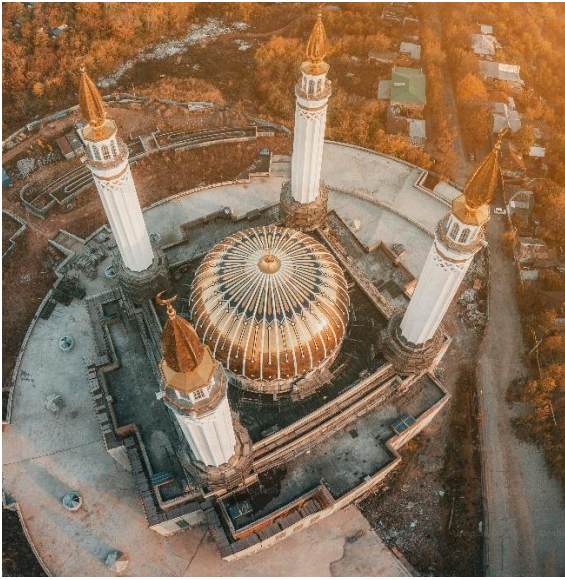
Islamophobia exists in many forms. Active forms include insults and attacks. Passive forms include ignoring, silencing and excluding Muslims. Many Muslim families have the lowest incomes and poorest housing in Britain.¹⁰³ Muslim majority countries are among the poorest and most exploited in the world, as well as among the rich oil states. Among the countries most extremely damaged by climate change, though they emit very low carbon emissions per capita, are Muslim majority countries.¹⁰⁴ Of NHS staff, 11.4% of doctors and 5.8% of all staff say they are Muslim.^{105,106} Many of them are under-paid, over-worked and often subjected to Islamophobic attacks. Insults that can seem trivial or 'jokey' to those who make them can cause deep distress, hurt, anxiety and fear.



Since 2003, the Government's PREVENT Strategy, intended to reduce extremism and terrorism, has been heavily weighted against Muslims. Citizens must report any suspicious incidents they see or hear. PREVENT may promote rather than reduce violence. A teacher in a London school with 95% Muslim students valued twice-daily open discussions with his tutor group.¹⁰⁷ Then PREVENT started and, afraid of being wrongly reported to authorities as extremists, the students stopped talking. Yet he believes the best way to promote trust and peace and to counter ideas that might lead a few to violence, extremism or terrorism – or to white far-right racism – is for young people to be able to raise and discuss controversial ideas critically together with supportive adults. Then they can question and challenge one another constructively, test and develop their beliefs, loyalties and values. For this, they need informed adults to help them, not to betray them by reporting them to the police.

Suspicion, when PREVENT erodes trust between school children and adults, was shown when a 4-year-old Muslim boy said, 'We must give alms (money) to the poor'. A teaching assistant thought he said 'arms' (weapons) and reported him.

Some Quakers are among leading antiracist campaigners. Yet racism, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism are insidious, woven deeply, often subconsciously, into everyday lives after centuries of British colonialism and Christian white supremacy.¹⁰⁸ In 2013, British Quakers were 99% white,¹⁰⁹ suggesting powerful though maybe unintended negative attitudes and influences.



Enslavement

For over 300 years, up to one third of the people trafficked from West Africa across the Atlantic to be enslaved may have been Muslims.¹¹⁰ They led the frequent protests, although they were crushed, hanged, burned, or even thrown into boiling oil. Muslim leaders educated other enslaved people and led the successful Haiti revolution. Many Muslims worked in West Africa trying to stop the British and French chattel slavery trade, and Islam became the dominant religion there by the 19th century.

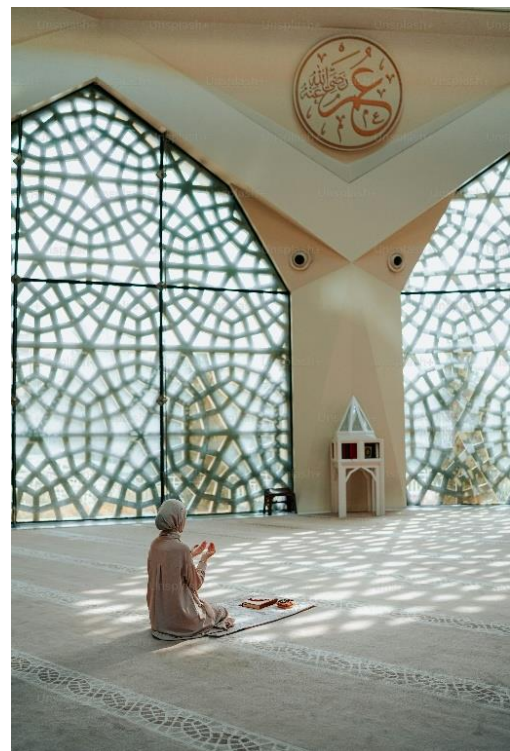
Many Quakers and Muslims owned enslaved people or worked in related industries and made profits from enslavement.^{111,112} Numerous Quakers kept resisting calls for abolition and punished brave protestors such as Benjamin Lay.^{113,114} Yet by 1774, all Yearly Meetings agreed that no Quaker could own enslaved people,¹¹⁵ and Quakers were among leading abolitionists.



Benjamin Lay

Since 2022, a British Quaker committee has considered making reparation for enslavement.¹¹⁶ One member believes, 'making explicit that unlearning Islamophobia and building loving, supportive relationships with Muslim groups (in the UK and abroad- including Palestine) is part of reparation'.¹¹⁷ A political view is that 'We need to reset the world to build a new world in which the resources of the world belong to the peoples of the world and...are used in order to solve the concrete problems that people face.'¹¹⁸

With their overlapping faith and values, and intertwined past, Quakers and Muslims could work more together to create a kind, just and peaceful world.



Some ways to promote closer Quaker-Muslim relations

Visiting Mosque open days

Inviting Muslims to share worship discussion meetings, food, poetry and music (check about diets when preparing food)

Interfaith discussion groups, such as on 'the deeper religious question: from where does violence arise?'^{119,120}

Learning with local Muslims how to deepen our faith and international understanding

Sharing work in local foodbanks, and services for homeless and other vulnerable people

Sharing peace walks and peaceful protests, such as to support Palestine and to protect immigrant communities from far-right attacks

Arranging playdays and outings for Quaker and Muslim children and families to enjoy together

Encouraging children and young people in schools to talk about what their faith means to them and to celebrate their religious festivals together

In Bergen, Norway, pairs of Muslim and Quaker school children are 'twins' in class and during all activities. They go to each other's homes and do homework together. Many form lasting friendships across religious and racial divides, and twinning helps to reduce racism and prejudice.

Inviting Quaker and Muslim hospital and prison chaplains to talk about their interfaith work.

Questions for discussion

How do Quakers and Muslims share ideas about spirituality?

How can Quakers and Muslims share in social witness?

Other ideas?

Personal views

Writing this pamphlet has involved many conversations and email exchanges. A Muslim woman who works on interfaith very kindly said:

'It was a real pleasure working on the pamphlet. Through this collaboration, we were able to learn a great deal from each other's faith traditions. I was helped to better understand how Quaker teachings on peace, simplicity, and respect for others strongly resonate with Islamic principles of peace, understanding, and mutual respect.

'This experience highlighted how both religions, while distinct in practice and history, share a deep commitment to compassion, nonviolence, and the dignity of every human being. It also created space for meaningful dialogue, breaking down assumptions, and building a stronger sense of

connection and shared values between our communities.

'As part of this, I hope to further develop my relationship with the Quaker community and continue building on this positive foundation of collaboration and shared learning.'

A Quaker said, 'A general connection that I personally feel between Islam and Quakerism is how faith permeates daily life for both groups: Muslims with their every day permeated by acts of prayer, and Quakers seeing Meetings for Business, peace vigils, committee work as well as ministering in Meeting all as forms of worship.'

Labour MP Naz Shah described the Qur'an as her 'feminist handbook'.¹²¹ Islam with its values of justice and compassion helped her to overcome huge personal problems. Her faith and religious teachings empowered her and validated feminist virtues of resilience. She said, 'We need to double down on creating empathy... [and] on going back to compassion in politics.' She resigned from her frontbench position in 2023, breaking away from most Labour MPs to call for a ceasefire in Gaza and an end to weapons sales to Israel.

Having spent several years both studying and working within Higher Education, one Muslim woman reflects that progress on inclusion, while real, remains incomplete. Her experience highlights a persistent gap between visible diversity initiatives and the deeper, lived sense of belonging that many still lack. She argues, 'the sector needs to move beyond surface-level gestures towards inclusion and engage more honestly with what it actually takes for every individual, regardless of faith or background, to feel truly recognised, supported and able to thrive. Genuine belonging is about the everyday experience of being seen, valued and able to bring one's whole self.' These experiences in universities that have clear equality and antiracism policies, relate to many institutions, including churches.

One woman whose mother is Coptic Christian and father is Muslim said, 'As someone who has spent much of my life navigating Christian-Muslim relationships, I often think we begin by focusing on our differences when there is so much to be

gained from first recognising the values we already hold in common: compassion, justice, peace and respect. That doesn't erase theological differences, but it does create a much stronger foundation for understanding one another. This takes both humility and courage in conversations between faith communities. The ideas about practical ways Quakers and Muslims might learn, work and build relationships together left me feeling really hopeful. Sometimes those small acts of connection are where the most meaningful change begins. Attempts on grounding love and understanding and human connection are the things we should all live for.'



Dora Bek, a universalist Quaker, imagined George Fox talking with the great Sufi poet Rumi, as brothers, on their shared beliefs about the mystical heart of their religions.¹²² Rumi believed we are all born with goodness and trust, ideals and dreams. The Muslim *Jihad* means inner struggle, effort and resistance, painful longing, progressing towards and connecting with the joy of the Divine inner Light, with our true soul/self, and so with everyone else, in peace, equality and integrity. Fox and Rumi both believed we should be kind to wrong-doers, seeing that of God within them, beloved God in all that exists and in our constant renewal and becoming.

Chris Adam Bagley, a Jewish Muslim Quaker, in his inspired writing about *Islam Today: A Muslim Quaker's View*, says: 'I dream of a time when every Quaker Meeting will have a Muslim member, who links across the religions, and occasionally ministers in Quaker meeting through reading a Hadith, or reflecting on the Quaker jihad of walking 'cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone.'¹²³

There are more ideas on Quaker websites.¹²⁴

Because of our free open approaches to faith, Quakers can be among the leading Christians in interfaith relations with Muslims, Jews and people of other faiths. *Quakers and Muslims* raises questions that urgently need discussion in this very difficult world we all live in.

Useful links

- * Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies
<https://www.cmcsoxford.org.uk/cmcs-news>
- * Christian Muslim Forum
<https://christianmuslimforum.org/>
- * Faith and Belief Forum
<https://faithbeliefforum.org/>
- * Muslim World League London Office, Interfaith work, www.mwllo.org.uk
- * Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations <https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/committees/quaker-committee-for-christian-and-interfaith-relations>
- * Quaker Palestine Solidarity UK,
quakerpalestinepeace@protonmail.com
- * Quaker South Asia Interest Group (QSAIG)
- * Weekly meetings of JUST CAMPAIGN to support Palestine, based on the American Friends Service Committee format, admin@campaign.org
- * Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW)
- * Quaker Universalist Group UK
<https://qug.org.uk/>
- * [Utruij Foundation](#) on Islamic Knowledge, [Utruij Foundation](#)

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Publisher. Web link. Date

Layout will be improved in the final version.

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