



Insight Meditation Community

OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

A Letter to our Sangha

Poem for Today

how cats send vibrations through air, saying *animal, animal, other animal,*
if you hear this your cells are healing, mine is yours!

how mushrooms send mycelium into soil, loose and light, mushroom radio
says *I am you are me we find ourselves we are selfearth!*

how poets say through the ether, *we are calling to you for help, for refuge!*

how children play in a hospital courtyard, saying *other kid, hey, catch this, hey,*
we're kids!

how the sun rises in the east, saying *pray, pray, pray!*

how doctors write on whiteboards, *if you find this, we stayed, remember us—*

— Andrea Lawlor

Dear Sangha,

The ongoing devastating situation in Palestine & Israel has been heavy on our hearts and minds these last weeks. We have taken time for reflection, for emotion, and for bearing witness as we have searched our hearts for what might be supportive to share from the IWM Leadership.

At a time like this, words fail. And, at a time like this, words have the power to further divide, and to add to pain. So we have struggled to find what, if anything, would constitute wise speech, under the circumstances. It hasn't been easy to come to consensus on this. But we also know that silence can cause harm.

We ask for your forgiveness if anything we say here causes hurt. We appreciate that some may find this statement to be too much and some not enough.

As we have reflected, we have become clear that:

- We want to honor in our sangha the profound grief many of us are experiencing over the loss of so many lives in the Middle East in recent weeks - more than 13,000 people at this writing, over 11,000 of them Palestinian - and our pain over the violence that continues to rage in the region.
- **We want to powerfully and unconditionally [echo](#) and support the call for a ceasefire.** Our pain at the unbearable suffering of Palestinians, as well as at the grief of Israelis who have lost loved ones, is a reflection of the truth of non-separateness. It moves us to work for peace. Our desire for peace is not taking a side, it is not ideological, and it can not be politicized.
- We want to echo and support the call for full access to food, water, electricity, medicine, and fuel to be provided to Gaza, as well as access to humanitarian aid and UN protection.
- We join the call for peace, equality, social justice, and the end of the dehumanizing treatment of Palestinians, who live under what has been defined by [Human Rights Watch](#) and [Amnesty International](#) as apartheid.
- We call on the US government to stop using our taxes to provide the state of Israel with billions of dollars of unconditional military aid. We want our government to fund restorative justice and peace, not more violence.
- We condemn the brutal attacks of Hamas on Israeli civilians that took place on October 7th. We lament the loss of over 1,200 Israeli lives and the abduction of some 240 people as hostages. And, like many of the families of the hostages, we believe it is manifestly clear that the hostages will only find safety when there is a ceasefire.
- We affirm that criticizing the government of Israel is not antisemitic. [Conflating all Jewish people with Israel's state policies](#) misses the longstanding social justice organizing of Jews in solidarity with Palestinians - both inside and outside Israel - and diverts attention away from actual

antisemitism on the rise. We unconditionally support the liberation of all beings, including Palestinians and Jews.

- And we want to name that the ancestral and generational trauma carried by many Jewish people - including some of us in the sangha leadership - will not be healed, nor will anyone be protected, by causing harm to another people, by dehumanizing and devaluing the lives of Palestinians. On the contrary, as we learn from the teachings of the Buddha, it is the intention of non-harming, of wishing well to all, that brings protection.

As Buddhists, we value peace, compassion, and wisdom. May these qualities infuse the hearts and minds of world leaders - and of all of us who hold power to influence the situation.

On Wednesday, December 6th, [we invite all to gather](#) in person in our space at Eastworks, or on Zoom, for an evening of metta (lovingkindness) and karuna (compassion) practice, as we hold space for our grief and root in the Dharma.

with care and metta,
IWM Leadership

- [Contact your representatives](#) This link includes a script and click-to-call feature.
- If you would like to join a Buddhist contingent of a local Interfaith Ceasefire movement, please fill out [this form](#).