



## **Responding to terrorism**

### **A statement from Quakers in Britain**

The attacks in Paris on 13 November were deeply shocking and our hearts continue to go out to those killed, injured, bereaved and traumatised.

It is human nature that the closer suffering comes to us, the more acutely we feel the pain and grief. But that experience should sensitise us to the suffering caused repeatedly by acts of war and violent crime in more distant places, including Beirut, Sinai, Bamako and Aleppo. It should strengthen our determination to build a safer world together.

Terrorism is a deliberate attempt to provoke fear, hatred, division and a state of war. War – especially war with the West - is what ISIS/Daesh wants. It confirms the image they project of the West as a colonialist 'crusader' power, which acts with impunity to impose its will overseas and especially against Muslims.

The military actions of Western nations recruit more people to the cause than they kill. Every bomb dropped is a recruitment poster for ISIS, a rallying point for the young, vulnerable and alienated. And every bomb dropped on Syrian cities drives yet more people to flee and seek refuge in safer countries.

Our political leaders seem determined that Britain should look strong on the world stage. Quakers in Britain believe our country should act with wisdom and far-sighted courage. A wisdom that rises above the temptation to respond to every problem with military might. A wisdom that looks back at our failures in Libya and Iraq and Afghanistan and learns from experience. The courage – and strength - to think through the likely consequences of actions to find a long term, lasting solution.

The courageous response of ordinary people who refuse to give up their way of life and refuse to be driven by fear is one that politicians could learn from.

Although there are no quick or easy answers, there are things we can do, all of us together, which will defeat the terrorists more assuredly than military action. Quakers in Britain commit to playing our part in these actions.

We can quieten ourselves and listen to the truth from deep within us that speaks of love, mutual respect, humanity and peace.

We can and will refuse to be divided. By bridge-building among faiths and within our local communities we can challenge and rise above the ideologies of hate and actively love our neighbour.

By welcoming refugees, we can not only meet the acute needs of those individuals but also undercut the narrative of those who seek to create fear and mistrust.

And we can ask our political leaders to:

- Treat terrorist acts as crimes, not acts of war
- Stop arming any of the parties fighting in Syria
- Observe international law and apply it equally to all parties
- Build cooperation among nations, strengthening those international institutions which contribute to peace
- Export peace rather than war, so that we can create the conditions the world needs to address its most serious problems, including climate change.

“True peace cannot be dictated, it can only be built in co-operation between all peoples. None of us, no nation, no citizen, is free from some responsibility for this.”

From a statement made by Quakers in Britain in 1943 (*Quaker faith & practice* 24.09)

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