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Veterans and Allies Conduct 40-Day “Fast for Gaza”

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VETERANS AND ALLIES CONDUCT 40-DAY “FAST FOR GAZA”

Bearing witness to the murder of innocents

New York. Tomorrow, a coalition of military veterans, religious and humanitarian organizations will begin a 40-day “Veterans & Allies Fast for Gaza,” with a news conference at 10:00 am ET, at the “Isaiah Wall” near the United Nations headquarters in New York City, moving to the U.S. Mission to the UN, where the fast will be conducted.

The demands of the fast are 1) Full humanitarian aid to Gaza under UN authority and 2) No more U.S. weapons to Israel.

A representative number of people will fast from May 22 to June 30 in New York, with many others participating around the U.S. and beyond for as many days as they can. To date, 249 people have registered. The fast is organized by Veterans For Peace along with 28 co-sponsoring organizations. Friends of Sabeel, NA is maintaining the list of fasters..

The UN fasters are limited to 250 calories per day, recently reported as the average intake for people in Gaza. Yesterday, UN Humanitarian Chief, Tom Fletcher, said 14,000 babies could die in Gaza within the next 48 hours.

A statement from the fasters condemned the genocide, saying, “We are horrified and outraged that Israel is using starvation as a war tactic in clear violation of international law, and we condemn our government’s complicity in the genocide of the Palestinian people.”

Phil Tottenham, a Marine Corps Veteran & VFP member in NY for the fast said, “I used to believe the U.S.-Israeli narrative my entire life until I began researching during the 2014

Gaza “War” and saw the cruelty inflicted on innocent civilians. And when I finally was able to visit the West Bank prior to Oct. 7th, I saw with my own eyes and felt with my heart how genuine and generous the Palestinians are and how they love all people, whether they are Jewish, Christian, or Muslim. But they don’t love their occupiers – who would? I did learn how vile racism towards Palestinians is intentionally taught in Israeli homes and schools and how Israel strategically separates them from each other.”

Joy Metzler, a VFP member and conscientious objector, said, “My entire military education was focused on how and why to wage war. I was being prepared to become a military professional. Now, I am watching as our government unconditionally supports the very violations of international law I was trained to recognize. I was trained to uphold the values of justice, and that is why I am speaking out and condemning our government’s complicity in the ethnic cleansing of Palestine.”

Rev. Addie Domske, National Field Organizer for Friends of Sabeel North America (FOSNA), said, “This month I celebrated my third Mother’s Day with a renewed commitment to parent my kid toward a free Palestine. No one can be a good mother without *acting* on what they believe should be possible for the People are joining the fast every day. More information will be released soon on NYC fasters and participants around the world. Our children. Mothering can’t only be about saying the right thing, but has to also be about doing the right thing. As we commemorate the 77th Nakba Day this month, we commit – with our bodies – to interrupt that evil plan to starve our Palestinian kin in Gaza. As a mother, I am responsible for feeding my child. I also believe, as a mother, I must be responsive when other children are starving. I’m committed to fasting for 40 days, starting May 22, because I want to remind my body that starvation of any person is unnatural.”

Mike Ferner, former National Director of Veterans For Peace and in NY for the fast, said, “Watching hundreds of people maimed, burned, and killed every day just tears at my insides – too much like when I nursed hundreds of wounded from our war in Viet Nam. I’m fasting to demand humanitarian aid resumption under UN authority and to stop U.S. weapons from fueling the genocide. And also to tell Americans that the same corporations that made billions by butchering people in Viet Nam cleaned up in Iraq, Afghanistan, and now in Gaza, right before our eyes in real time. Our taxes help Israel provide full health care to all its citizens while millions of Americans go without it, and we spend billions killing people. This madness will only stop when enough Americans demand it stops.”

Kathy Kelly, board president of World BEYOND War, also in NY for the fast, said, “Nobel laureate Mairead Maguire, at age 81, recently fasted for forty days to protest Israel’s

starvation of 2.5 million people and the horrifying expansion of attacks against Palestinians. Mairead Maguire wrote: ‘As the children of Gaza are hungry and injured with bombs by official Israeli policy, I have decided that I, too, must go hungry with them, as I in good conscience can do no other.’ Now, Israel intensifies its efforts to eradicate Gaza through bombing, forcible displacement, and siege. We must follow Mairead’s lead, hungering acutely for an end to all weapon shipments to Israel. We must ask, ‘who are the criminals?’ as war crimes multiply and political leaders fail to stop them.”

Bios for initial NYC Fasters:

Joy Metzler: 23, Cocoa FL. VFP member, co-founder of Servicemembers For Ceasefire, USAF Academy ‘23 graduate. Left the Air Force and became a conscientious objector, citing US aggression in the Middle East and the continued ethnic cleansing in all of Palestine and the ongoing mass massacre of Palestinians in Gaza.

Phil Tottenham: 47, Toledo OH. Marine Corps veteran, VFP member, descendant of “Old 300” original Texas settlers. Took a sledgehammer to apartheid wall in the West Bank.

Kathy Kelly: 72, St. Charles, IL. Board President of World BEYOND War; defied economic sanctions against Iraq by traveling there, with medicines, 27 times; lived in Iraq throughout the “Shock and Awe” bombing; lived with families in Gaza, Jenin, and Lebanon during past U.S. supported Israeli operations. Helped coordinate the Merchants of Death War Crimes Tribunal.

Mike Ferner: 74, Toledo OH. Former director of Veterans For Peace; Navy corpsman 1969-73; member of Toledo City Council 1989-93. Participated in a 35-day water-only fast to protest the invasion of Iraq, 2006. Author of “Inside the Red Zone: A Veteran For Peace Reports from Iraq.” He is currently being treated for Gleason-10 prostate cancer.

Bios unavailable at this time:

Ken Ashe, Asheville NC, VFP member

Russell Brown, Buffalo NY, VFP member

People are joining the fast every day. More information will be released on NYC fasters and participants around the world.

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