

Statement on behalf of the Proposed Intervener
Paul Edward Parker
First statement
Exhibit: PEP1
Date: 15 August 2025

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE

KING'S BENCH DIVISION

ADMINISTRATIVE COURT

Court ref: AC-2025-LON-002122

B E T W E E N :

THE KING, on the application of HUDA AMMORI

Claimant

– and –

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT

Defendant

– and –

BRITAIN YEARLY MEETING OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)

Proposed Intervener

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF PAUL EDWARD PARKER

I, Paul Edward Parker, of the Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Friends House, 173-177 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ, WILL SAY AS FOLLOWS:

1. I am the Recording Clerk of the Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) ("**Quakers in Britain**"). I provide this statement in support of our application to intervene in the above proceedings, in which the Claimant challenges the Defendant's decision to make an order adding Palestine Action to the list of proscribed organisations in Schedule 2 to the Terrorism Act 2000.
2. I have prepared this statement with the assistance of my solicitors, Leigh Day, with whom I have had various email exchanges.

Background to Quaker faith and practices

3. Although we tend to use 'Quakers in Britain' to refer to all aspects of the Quaker church and charity, the official name for the organisation under charitable registration is 'Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)'. 'Yearly Meeting of Quakers in Britain' is the name of our annual gathering of the Quaker community in Britain and is also our paramount decision-making body.
4. The office of Recording Clerk includes the role of secretary to the Yearly Meeting of Quakers in Britain and 'keeper and interpreter of the regulations which make up our church government' which means that I am able to speak on the current positions and practices of Quakers in Britain. The Recording Clerk also acts as chief executive and spokesperson in relation to the charitable work and the employed staff of Britain Yearly Meeting.
5. Quakerism was founded in the 17th century. A key insight of the early Quakers was that every person could have a direct relationship with God. This meant that Quakers did not require a priest as intermediary in their communications with the spirit. Although it is sometimes said that Quakers have no clergy, we prefer to say that we have no laity. By this we mean that all Quakers have the ability to hear the word of God directly, to share it with others, and to act in accordance with their understanding of it.
6. Quaker worship starts with silent waiting. Some people in the meeting may speak (referred to as vocal ministry). Vocal ministry should be inspired by the spirit and the speaker should feel that what they are saying needs to be said. We often explain this by saying that we speak in meeting for worship only when we feel we are impelled to do so.

7. Quaker decision making is also based on silent waiting. Quakers in Britain have no paid clergy and no Quaker has religious authority over another. Quaker decisions are reached collectively in meetings for worship for business through a process known as corporate discernment, or the Quaker business method. This process requires us to listen together for the right way forward in relation to whatever issue requires a decision. A decision is reached when those present agree that it is the right thing for the group, based on their understanding of what God wants for them. We describe this as being in unity.
8. Individual Quakers hold a range of theological understandings of the divine, seeking to align our lives to our spiritual leadings. Thus living as a Quaker means trying to act in accordance with our understanding of God's will. Understanding God's will may not be easy. When we feel we are called to make large or difficult changes to our way of life then we exercise discernment through silent worship. We may find guidance in previous corporate discernment of the Yearly Meeting of Quakers in Britain including in our corporate testimonies to truth, equality, and peace.
9. It is an imperative of our faith that we are able to listen for the will of God and to follow it with our words and actions. From the founding of Quakerism in the 17th century Quakers have been led by faith to witness (take action) against unjust laws and practices. For example, Quakers were part of the anti-slavery movement in the 19th century, the movement for nuclear abolition in the 20th century, and the campaign for equal (same sex) marriage in the 21st century. Quakers have been working for peace in Israel and Palestine for many years and continue to do so today.
10. Quaker witness can take a range of forms – including engaging with powerholders, speaking out, helping to relieve suffering, direct action, as well as prayerful upholding and support for activists within our community.
11. Sometimes our religious conviction can be so strong that it puts individual Quakers in conflict with the laws of the state and some may choose to take actions that are not lawful. It is a fundamental principle that any direct action should be nonviolent. Those who undertake this kind of witness take responsibility for it and are prepared to be held accountable for their actions. Across three hundred years many Quakers have been convicted in relation to nonviolent direct action directly inspired by their understanding of

God's will. In the 17th century Quakers were persecuted for their faith and many Quakers were imprisoned for preaching and for refusing to swear oaths. Bushel's case, which established the independence of juries, arose from a prosecution of two Quakers charged with unlawful assembly in relation to preaching. During the First and Second World Wars, many Quakers were conscientious objectors and one of my predecessors was imprisoned for defying the censor. Quakers offered care to the families of interned aliens during the First World War, in the 1930s offered sanctuary to Jewish children through the Kindertransport, and during and after the Second World War initiated the prompt relief work which earned them the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947.

12. More recently, many Quakers were part of the Greenham Common peace camps and were charged with offences of criminal damage. Quakers have been involved in other nonviolent direct actions for peace targeting military bases or arms company facilities. In 1999 A Quaker was one of the 'trident three' charged but ultimately acquitted of malicious damage after emptying equipment from a Trident nuclear submarine support barge into Loch Goil. In 2017, another Quaker was one of two people acquitted of criminal damage after breaking into a BAE owned site at Warton. The two were trying to stop Tornado Jets being used by Saudi Arabia to bomb Yemen. Other Quakers have faced various other charges for entering military-linked sites without permission in order to carry out nonviolent witness for peace. These include the naval bases at Faslane and Forest Moor and air force stations at Menwith Hill and Fairford.
13. Quakers in Britain continues to maintain a 'prison and court register' which lists Quakers who are known to have been arrested and/or convicted for nonviolent direction action motivated by their faith. When entries are made in the register then Quakers are asked to pray for (or 'uphold') those who have taken such actions.

Quaker engagement in Israel/Palestine/Gaza

14. Quakers have a long history of working for peace in Israel and Palestine. There has been an active Palestinian and international Quaker community based in Ramallah in the West Bank since the 1800s. At the request of the United Nations, Quakers began administering relief for refugees in Gaza in the late 1940s, setting up clinics, local hospitals, a midwifery training programme and a school programme. In the 1970s, under agreement with the UN,

Quakers established pre-school activity centres in Gaza which developed into the Palestinian Early Childhood Education Programme. The Quaker Service Legal Aid and Information Center in Jerusalem was established in 1973. In the 1990s a Quaker youth programme ran in the West Bank and Gaza, developing the capacity of youth and staff working in youth organisations.

15. Since 2003, Quakers in Britain has managed the UK & Ireland branch of the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) on behalf of 17 other churches and church-related organisations. Human rights monitors live alongside communities working nonviolently to end the occupation. They provide a protective presence, respond to, record and report human rights violations.
16. Quakers in Britain also uses this experience to bring eyewitness accounts of life under occupation to the world's attention. We advocate for an end to the occupation and for a just peace where both Palestinians and Israelis can enjoy freedom, dignity and security in accordance with international law.
17. We have watched with horror as the latest waves of violence have unfolded in Israel and Palestine since October 2023. Since then, Quakers in Britain have made more than 50 official statements in relation to the situation. We have consistently called for an immediate ceasefire from all sides, for humanitarian relief for Gazans and for the release of Israeli hostages. Most recently, in July 2025 we added our name to a joint statement of over 100 humanitarian organisations calling on governments to act in the face of mass starvation in Gaza. Also in July 2025 we joined 15 other organisations in asking the UK government to honour their legal obligations resulting from the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion in July 2024 concerning the risk of genocide and Israel's unlawful occupation of Palestinian territory. At all stages, and in line with our commitment to peace, we have called for an end to all arms sales to Israel.
18. Our public statements come from the corporate discernment of Quakers in meetings. Relevant discernment about Israel and Palestine from before the October 2023 escalation includes the following: the 2011 decision that Quakers would boycott goods produced in the illegal Israeli settlements; the 2014 call for the UK government to recognise the state of Palestine; and the 2018 decision to amend the Quakers in Britain investment policy to preclude investments in companies profiting from the occupation of Palestine.

19. In October 2024 the national Quaker representative body (known as Meeting for Sufferings) determined that Quakers in Britain should align with International Court of Justice rulings and state that 'apartheid' was an accurate description of the situation in occupied Palestine and that there was a plausible risk of genocide in Gaza at that time.
20. After a long process of further discernment, in May 2025, Britain Yearly Meeting made a minute which states its belief that the Israeli Government is committing genocide in Gaza, which I exhibit at **Exhibit PEP1**. This decision was born of religious and not merely political conviction. It is our belief that by speaking the truth that is given to us we may open the way for change. In this case, we spoke out about genocide in the hope that by calling these dreadful actions what they are then we might inspire action by those with the power to make them stop.
21. The Yearly Meeting in 2025 was attended by around 650 Quakers in person and a further 300 online. Quaker practice is for a minute to be agreed when all those taking part in a meeting agree and unite with it. Minutes of the Yearly Meeting – the national gathering and paramount decision-making body of Quakers in Britain – are understood by Quakers as representing the position of the Quaker church as a whole; it is expected that all Quakers will take them seriously and consider how to act upon them in their own lives, including, where appropriate, engaging in acts of witness.
22. For many, this particular decision has been a catalyst leading them to commit (or recommit) – as an act of faith – to witness aimed at ending the genocide in Gaza and more broadly in support of a just peace for the people of Palestine and Israel. Many Quakers were already engaged in activities such as attending protest marches, engaging with elected representatives, organising acts of public worship to pray for peace, organising events to share the experience of human rights monitors, boycotting goods and services linked to the occupation of Palestine and lobbying financial service companies reported to be supporting these. We have seen increased interest and participation in these activities since the Yearly Meeting decision. New forms of witness are also springing up. For example, at least one meeting is now prominently displaying a large poster, calling for an end to the genocide, outside its building. Other meetings are now requesting that Quakers in Britain provide them with similar resources.

The impact of the Proscription Order on the fundamental tenets of Quaker Faith

23. The Proscription Order on Palestine Action interferes with our ability to act in accordance with our faith and respond to our religious leadings.
24. As described above, our meetings for worship begin in silence. Anyone present may give vocal ministry by speaking into the silence. Quakers understand that vocal ministry in meeting for worship represents a response to God's leadings. Ministry is not pre-prepared and is inspired in the moment. Nonetheless, it may be prompted by daily experiences and concerns, including the speaker's feelings about their own life and situation, or about international events. The desperate suffering of people across Israel and Palestine may provoke feelings of sorrow, helplessness, anger, or a determination to work for change. A Quaker sitting with those feelings in meeting for worship may find that God gives them words to share with others present.
25. A Quaker giving that ministry should not have to worry about the possibility that in the moment their words might be interpreted as support for terrorism, but I am concerned that this may now be the case. Quakers in Britain staff have told me about a Quaker who gave spoken ministry several weeks ago about upholding other Quakers arrested for their witness, including those arrested for supporting Palestine Action, and who is now worried that if they were to say the same thing now, someone in their meeting might report them to the police. That person no longer feels confident to speak from the heart, as led by the spirit, during worship.
26. Part of the purpose of vocal ministry in meeting for worship is to allow others present to hear whatever insight the speaker has been given. Words heard during worship may be particularly inspirational and may prompt action from those who hear them. The Quaker peace testimony means that we would not expect to hear ministry that advocated for violence of any kind and we would expect direct action inspired by the ministry of others to be nonviolent. We do not see protest which is violent against people as a valid form of witness for Quakers. It is very concerning that ministry in response to a religious prompting that does not advocate for violence against people could be seen as a terrorist offence if it is or is interpreted as supporting one particular group.

27. As described above, Quaker decision making relies on listening for God's guidance. When considering how to witness for their beliefs, Quakers will undertake personal discernment. Many Quakers have historically undertaken acts of lawful and peaceful civil disobedience (and many seek to continue to do this). Other Quakers have protested by committing non-violent but unlawful acts of civil disobedience. High levels of uncertainty about what action may be covered by the proscription combined with reports of overzealous policing in relation to other protest groups have had a chilling effect on Quakers' ability to understand and weigh the consequences of specific actions. When there is a significant chance of a lawful act being wrongly interpreted as unlawful, the risks of taking action increase significantly. The ambiguity of the Secretary of State's order is a significant cause of this uncertainty.
28. Quakers are very aware of the tightening of protest laws such that previously legal acts of protest may now be illegal. In March 2025 a police raid took place on Westminster Quaker Meeting House in order to arrest a small number of young people who were accused of planning nonviolent direct action. Local Quakers raised concerns about the proportionality of the tactics used but the police maintained their stance that their actions were justified. Threatening policing and unlawful arrests can be extremely distressing, even if charges do not follow. The raid on a place of worship caused alarm among other faith communities and led leaders from all major faiths to sign a letter to the government expressing concern about this police action.
29. The proscription order adds to the uncertainty about what protest may be permitted. By further discouraging Quakers from following their consciences and engaging in lawful, nonviolent acts, the proscription therefore directly hinders our community's ability to fulfil its commitment to speak out against the genocide in Gaza. This situation prevents Quakers from fully exercising their freedom of religion.
30. The personal discernment undertaken by some Quakers will lead them to take action that breaks the law. In recent years, several Quakers have been prosecuted under different legislation for witness on issues such as climate change, nuclear weapons and the arms trade. Legal proceedings can have a lifelong impact, including on relationships with family and friends, income and the ability to work/hold professional certifications. As outlined above, before deciding to act, many Quakers will have reflected deeply on the potential consequences – only deciding to go ahead if they are willing and able to bear them. The

use of anti-terror legislation in relation to nonviolent protest greatly increases those consequences since a terrorism conviction may have a significantly greater impact on someone's life than one for, for example, criminal damage.

31. Quakers in Britain staff tell me that so far as they know, prior to the proscription only a small number of Quakers were specifically involved in Palestine Action. Since the proscription I have been informed that around a dozen Quakers have been arrested in relation to offences of supporting Palestine Action, including at the protest event in Parliament Square on 9 August 2025. The precise number of Quakers involved is difficult to confirm because it takes time for Quakers in Britain staff to find out about arrests of Quakers.
32. Quakers in Britain staff have informed me that they have noticed more hesitancy among Quakers in talking about protest and action on Palestine. There is a sense among some Quakers with no involvement in Palestine Action that any action calling for an end to the genocide in Gaza or in support of Palestinian rights could be interpreted as support for the group. This concern is fuelled by many media reports of individuals being arrested or threatened with arrest for demonstrating pro-Palestinian sentiment without specific reference to any proscribed organisation.
33. Quakers have informed our staff about the following specific examples of increasing concern and hesitancy about protesting in relation to Palestine:
 - a. A Quaker informed us that they were fearful of being arrested if they walked around with signs describing what's going on in Gaza. This incident is symptomatic of how many Quakers are uncertain about the implications of the proscription. With inconsistent policing across the UK, it is impossible for staff to give complete reassurance that the law will be correctly applied in every case.
 - b. Some Quakers have told us they feel scared to even say the name 'Palestine Action' in a neutral discussion about the implications of the proscription. We are seeing self-censoring as a result.

- c. A Quaker WhatsApp group set up to coordinate a Quaker presence at the regular national demonstrations for Palestine spent weeks debating whether it should change its name (which formerly included the words 'Palestine' and 'Action') to avoid inadvertently falling foul of the law. The WhatsApp group had never been used to organise action as part of Palestine Action, and its intention was clearly about supporting 'legal' witness, but the simple word association made them feel unsafe. This took time and energy away from the group's core purpose.
 - d. Several former group members of the same Quaker WhatsApp group said they no longer felt secure being part of the group and left, feeling unable to return even after the name change. This included one member who had not taken part in demonstrations but whose contribution had been to offer prayerful upholding and support to those who did. After a surge in membership following BYM's genocide statement in May, the period since the proscription announcement has coincided with a notable drop off (10-20 Friends). The group admin has told Quakers in Britain staff that they suspect that fear and confusion around the proscription has been a significant reason for this.
 - e. Some Quakers who have attended the national Palestine Solidarity Campaign demonstrations have said they no longer feel safe in doing so.
 - f. A group of Quakers who regularly participate in a Palestine protest in Kendal were recently approached by a police officer asking if anyone had placards with the words Palestine and Action on them "in any order" because there was a new law and those words could be supporting terrorism. Although the Quaker who reported this was relatively confident that the information given by the officer was incorrect, they were distressed by the interaction. The Quaker group had been attending this regular protest for around two years and had never before seen a police presence. The officer informed them that they were from outside of the area.
34. Increasingly restrictive protest legislation has already started to have a chilling effect on our ability to witness on other issues too and we are fearful that the use of anti-terror legislation to proscribe direct action groups will make this worse. For example, for a number of years Quakers have organised and participated in acts of worship outside the

gates of the ExCeL centre in Newham during the biennial DSEI arms fair. Quakers in Britain staff are hearing more concern this year than in previous years about the likely consequences of such participation. I have been told that one individual who has participated before has declined to be involved again as they feel the legal risks are now too great. Overall, the group has less energy and has fewer members willing to get actively involved.

Impacts on Britain Yearly Meeting as an organisation

35. As a church and charity, Britain Yearly Meeting and its staff have also struggled to navigate the implications of Palestine Action's proscription – despite our organisation never having worked with or supported the group. There are several examples of this.
36. In line with our charitable purposes, a key role of staff is to support individuals and Quaker groups who are led to undertake acts of witness. We need to balance this with managing risk to our organisation and the requirement for charitable funds only to be used for activities within the law. Proscription of Palestine Action has added significant complexity. Responding to enquiries is taking up a significant amount of time from staff and trustees. For example, we have had a number of enquiries from local Quaker groups wanting to know if/how they can protest the proscription. In one case this became very urgent as staff had to advise on a potential press statement that was due to be shared and which we could not be confident was lawful. In another example, another Quaker meeting needed advice about a prior planned documentary film screening. Quakers in Britain staff have had to send out a briefing note and organise a special online discussion session to ensure that independent Quaker organisations have a clear picture of how the proscription could impact on them. This extra work inevitably diverts resources away from our core activities and agreed priorities.
37. We have received numerous questions and requests for advice since the proscription; many of which our staff are not qualified to answer. Although we have offered the best internal guidance we can, the many legal uncertainties mean that staff struggle to make judgement calls without significant internal consultation. In some cases, despite considerable work to provide appropriate information, staff worry that Quakers may not fully understand the increased legal risk of speaking out in this area.

38. Because the consequences of giving wrong advice are so serious, there is a significant risk that staff become too conservative in the advice and support they do offer. This might mean discouraging Friends from undertaking witness that doesn't actually contravene the law or declining requests for support where the legality is not clear cut. This undermines our ability to fulfil our charitable objectives and risks undermining our members' trust in our work.
39. For example, we recently declined a request from the family of one of the Filton 23 (activists waiting trial for alleged direct action against a weapons manufacturer) to use the green space outside our building to hold a multi-faith prayer and reflection event to mark the anniversary of their imprisonment. The alleged direct action took place well before the proscription and the kind of request is one we'd ordinarily be sympathetic to. However, we considered it too high risk to support without legal advice. As we couldn't justify the use of charitable funds to procure that advice, we felt that we had to decline.
40. Many staff feel they must be increasingly cautious about what they say to each other and what information they share – particularly in writing – about their own views or about individual Quakers engaged in pro-Palestine witness. This impedes our ability to work effectively and understand what is going on within the Quaker community. It also has the potential to undermine trust within our workplace.
41. We are currently refusing some posts on our private Quaker Facebook group about witness for Palestine and spending more time checking comments to ensure they do not contain links to things which could be interpreted as support for a proscribed organisation. This is time consuming and very stressful for staff. The impact of our decision is to stop Quakers from discussing and sharing information about how to act on a key area of Quaker concern, in accordance with their faith.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

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Exhibit: PEP1
Date: 15 August 2025

Signed:

Paul Edward Parker

Dated: 15 August 2025