



QUAKER UNITED NATIONS OFFICE

Friends World Committee for Consultation

American Friends Service Committee

September 17, 2001

In Response to the Tragic Events of September 11

We grieve over the September 11, 2001, disaster that has taken so many lives. We share in mourning with all those who have lost loved ones and give thanks for the heroic efforts of rescuers. The loss will live with us for years to come.

For over 300 years, Quakers (the Religious Society of Friends) have endeavored to build a just and non-violent society. The Quaker United Nations Office in New York has collaborated with the UN since 1947 to encourage a focus on people as well as politics, and on peaceful ways of including all groups and hearing their needs. In the wake of this tragedy, we will continue to strive for increased international understanding and cooperation.

As Friends at the UN, we cannot overemphasize the importance of a humane and rational response. Although many feel an urgent need to react strongly, some even violently, vengeful retaliation will not make the world safer from such threats. Indeed, it will only feed the cycle of violence behind these horrific acts. Rather, the security of nations and peoples must be based on human well-being, strengthened international cooperation and norms, and respect for the rule of law.

We call on all individuals and decision-makers to reject the clamor of war and work with the global community to prevent further violence.

In the short term, focus needs to be on securing the arrest and trial of those responsible and assuring fair judicial process in collaboration with the international community. Governments, communities, and individuals should take responsibility not to scapegoat any nation, faith, or ethnic group. In the long term, the difficult process of addressing the anger, resentment, and hatred that fueled the attack must begin. It is disingenuous to regard non-state terrorism as simply aberrant attacks of fanatics when such incidents have become commonplace in much of the world and often enjoy popular support from aggrieved peoples. A clearer understanding of the roots of such violence is needed, including recognition of the extent to which national and international policies have contributed to creating and sustaining the despair and frustration behind these extreme acts.

Finally, we agree with Martin Luther King, Jr., that violence is “a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy....adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.” We pray that the citizens and leaders of the world will rise to this challenge and move with generosity toward healing and reconciliation.