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The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States of America
By email and by hand to the US Embassy in Berlin

Your Middle East Mission
An Open Letter from the International Plum Village Community
of Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh

19 October 2023

Dear Mr President,

At this time of war, the world looks to the United States to use its influence in the Middle East to bring about an immediate halt to the killing and violence there, and to speed the flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

From long experience, Mr President, you know that conflicts – no matter how intractable – are best resolved when peace negotiations – no matter how complex – can move forward. There can be no end to the suffering in the Middle East if things continue as they are.

It is our belief that, as the Buddha said, hatred cannot respond to hatred; only love and compassion can respond to hatred. And as our teacher Venerable Thích Nhất Hạnh said in a lifetime of peace advocacy during and after the Vietnam War: “There is no way to peace, peace is the way.”

During an historic visit to Vietnam in 2016, President Obama hailed how the former enemies had transformed their relationship, quoting the words of our teacher: “In true dialogue, both sides are willing to change.” Vietnam and the US are proof of that, as reinforced by your recent visit to Hanoi.

As Venerable Thích Nhất Hạnh’s students, today we issue an open invitation (pp 3-4) for people to sit together for peace in the Middle East, Ukraine, and other war zones. We also offer a meditation (pp 5-6), teachings, practice and prayers (pp 7-20) to

support all who wish to cultivate understanding, compassion, tolerance and peace in themselves, their families, their communities, and nations.

We respectfully invite you, Secretary Blinken, and your entire team to sit with us whenever, wherever you can as there is no time to lose. It is our fervent hope that you will succeed in initiating true dialogue in the Middle East between all who yearn for peace and are willing to change.

Yours sincerely,



Bhikshu Thích Chân Pháp Ấn
Elder Monk



Seal of Plum Village



Bhikshuni Thích Nữ Chân Không
Elder Nun



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AN INVITATION TO SIT TOGETHER FOR PEACE

From the International Plum Village Community of Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh

19 October 2023

The Buddha, a peace worker amidst the violence and conflicts of his time, said that hatred cannot respond to hatred; only love and compassion can respond to hatred. He called this an eternal truth, an eternal law.

The current conflict in the Middle East is a response to a long, complex, and troubled history. It is so painful to see what is happening there, especially to civilians on both sides. We appeal to all combatants to put an immediate stop to killing and acts of violence. This is difficult but there is no other way. There can be no solution, no end to the suffering if things continue as they are.

Our teacher Venerable Thích Nhất Hạnh, who experienced decades of war in Vietnam and dedicated his life to peace, has said that man is not our enemy. “Our true enemy is hatred, ignorance, fear and the seed of violence deep in our consciousness.”

From a Buddhist perspective, the wars in the Middle East, Ukraine and beyond are a collective manifestation of human consciousness; of the collective destructive energy that exists within humanity. This destructive energy is a fundamental cause of human suffering. As members of the human family, each of us has a duty to recognize suffering within us, and a responsibility to transform “the seed of violence” into the reality of peace.

We can begin by resolving daily conflicts in ourselves, our families, our relationships with friends, our societies. The whole world needs to practice being peaceful. It is always possible to live together. It is always possible to sit down and discuss reconciliation so that a solution can be found. We need a global community of individuals living in this awareness to address the world’s problems and crises.

At this difficult time, it is important to take root in ourselves and calm our emotions. We invite our Israeli, Palestinian, Ukrainian friends, and all who suffer in conflict zones, to sit with us so that, together, we may cool anger and hatred, stop harmful actions, open our hearts, generate compassion, and radiate the powerful energy of peace.

Our beloved Israeli and Palestinian friends urgently need the support of the international community – of each of us. They need to know that the whole world shares in their suffering and sorrow, that we send our love and pray for their safety and wellbeing. This is a time for the entire human family to manifest our capacity for wisdom, compassion, tolerance, and peace.

As our teacher says: “There is no way to peace, peace is the way”.

All our ancestors and descendants are counting on us to build a peaceful life on Earth.

With love and trust,

*Bhikshu Thích Chân Pháp Ấn
Elder Monk*



Seal of Plum Village

*Bhikshuni Thích Nữ Chân Không
Elder Nun*

A Guided Meditation to Cultivate Stability, Radiate Compassion

(Abridged)

At this painful time for the world, we offer a meditation to help us cultivate solidity and stability, so we may open our hearts, radiate compassion, and support all who suffer from war and other disasters. The great energy of compassion can cool down anger, hatred, and violence.

We begin by sitting up straight and gently following our inbreath and our outbreath. We relax our body and gradually focus our attention on our lower abdomen, gradually sinking the energy down to our lower abdomen, which is our energy center and root.

Allowing the energy in my body to sink down to my lower abdomen, I breathe in.

Visualizing roots extending beneath my body into the Earth, I breathe out.

Deeply connected to the Earth, I breathe in

Allowing the energy to sink deeper into the Earth, I breathe out.

Feeling even more stable, more solid, more peaceful, I invite all who are suffering in war zones to sit with us.

I invite all Israelis and Palestinians to sit with us, now, in stability and solidity.

We take root deeply into the Earth, so that anger, hatred, sadness, depression, and hopelessness cannot move us.

With solidity, we do not let this war blow us away, nor turn us into its victims.

Man is not our true enemy. Our true enemy is the hatred, violence, and ignorance within us.

I am deeply connected to the Earth. I am very stable and solid.

I now invite friends from Ukraine, Russia, Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia and all troubled places on Earth, to sit with us.

I invite friends from places destroyed by earthquakes, fires, floods, and other disasters to sit with us.

We shall sit together solidly and stably, our roots connected deeply into the Earth, so these difficulties cannot blow us away or make us victims.

I am solid as a mountain, free from all hatred, free from all violence.

I allow the energy of compassion from my heart to flow out to embrace myself and all who are going through trauma, violence, and death.

May the energy of compassion embrace all of us on Earth to help us heal and transform our difficulties.

May the great energy of compassion help to cool down the hatred, the anger, the violence, so that all friends in war zones can be protected.

The Buddha taught: "Hatred cannot respond to hatred; only love and compassion can respond to hatred. This is the eternal truth, the eternal law."

It is always possible to live together. It is always possible to sit down and discuss reconciliation so that a solution can be found.

May everyone on Earth open their heart, so that everyone can see the light, the light of God, the light of goodness, of beauty and truth.

We continue to cultivate our solidity and our stability, so that we can offer support right now to all who suffer from conflict between humans and with nature.

The only way out is our peace, our solidity, our stability.

With this energy, we offer help; we support them.

We embrace them with all the compassion in our hearts.

We also offer related teachings, practice and prayers. From pp 7- 20 are:

- *Dharma talks and the extended version of the guided meditation by Bhikshu Thích Chân Pháp Ấn at a retreat in Tyrol, Austria, for "Cultivating Compassion in a Time of War"*
- *An Open Letter Calling For Peace, issued by the International Plum Village Community on 2 April, 2022, as the war in Ukraine began to unfold*
- *Cultivating a Culture of Peace - Our Community's Commitment and Prayer on New Year's Eve 2021, issued as the world struggled with fear and loss during the Covid-19 pandemic*

Online are:

- *A Cloud Never Dies, a biographical documentary recounting Venerable Thích Nhất Hạnh's life's work for peace*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRObW9noiVk&ab_channel=PlumVillage
- *Teachings offered by Venerable Thích Nhất Hạnh during retreats at Plum Village Monastery, France, inviting Israelis and Palestinians to practice mindfulness together*
<https://plumvillage.org/articles/peace-between-palestinians-and-israelis>
- *Teaching tours by Plum Village monastics to Israel and Palestine*
<https://plumvillage.org/articles/touching-peace-in-palestine>
More groups of Israelis and Palestinians have since been invited to practice together in Plum Village