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Mindfulness Concentration Insight

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 for people to sit together for peace in the Middle East, Ukraine, and other war zones. We also offer a meditation, and teachings to support all who wish to cultivate

understanding, compassion, tolerance and peace in themselves, their families, their communities, and nations. Kindly refer to pages 3 to 6.

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*