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# Interfaith Philadelphia



May 30, 2022

We struggle for adequate words to express the emotions felt by the Co-Conveners of the Religious Leaders Council when we learned of the mass violence committed against 19 children and two teachers in Uvalde, Texas. Horror, anguish, and grief are the words we are using, but even they seem inadequate for the loss and pain resulting from mass violence in Uvalde, Buffalo, New York, and other places.

We represent many different faith communities in Philadelphia. All of us hold the steadfast belief that God has created all of humanity as sacred and that violence violates all the principles of our respective faith traditions. Our emotions pale compared to those of the families who lost their loved ones in Uvalde this week. Those innocent children woke up eager to learn and spend time with friends. Instead, their dreams, hopes, aspirations, and loving hearts were cut down by evil.

We cannot fully comprehend either what they felt in those moments, or the abyss of sorrow being experienced by their families. Those children were precious gifts from God that have been violently ripped away.

In the wake of this tragedy, there have been many statements of condolences, but we cannot simply issue a statement. We must speak out and we must listen. Beloved children of God are dying throughout our country each day. Beloved children of God are afraid to go to school or walk the streets. We must advocate and will firmly push for serious and difficult discussions addressing the broad array of issues leading to the ongoing and avoidable slaughter.

We then offer our faith traditions and individual time to find a solution where people can speak and deeply listen. We cannot imagine that we cannot find a solution as a society, community, or country. No. The solution must be found. If we do not find a solution, we are not living out our deeply held and shared belief that all lives are precious. We cannot accept the loss of one more life. We must, and we will step into the pain with deliberate, thoughtful, and prayerful discussions, actions, and solutions.

Prayerfully,

Bishop Daniel Gutierrez  
Imam Anwar Muhaimin  
Archbishop Nelson Perez  
Rabbi David Straus  
Co-Conveners of the Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia

Imam Quaiser Abdullah, Board Chair  
Abby Stamelman Hocky, Executive Director  
Rev. Edward Livingston, Director of Religious Community Initiatives  
Interfaith Philadelphia

*Dare to understand.*

**Interfaith Philadelphia**  
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