

Amnesty - 1973

The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods expresses its most fervent hope that the Cease-Fire Accord of the Vietnam War, signed in Paris on Saturday, January 27, 1973, will ripen into a just and lasting peace. May it yet provide a needed opportunity to reconcile the deep domestic divisions which for too many years have embittered our society.

Mindful of the Jewish religious precept to temper justice with mercy, a major effort to effect this healing process in the United States is for the President or Congress of the United States to grant unconditional amnesty to those young men who found, early or late, that they could not participate in the Vietnam War, and so either went to prison, resisted or deserted. As we make peace with our enemies, let us also make peace with the youth of America, whether or not in conscience they served in the Armed Forces or took another path. Among the latter were religious pacifists who hold war itself in abhorrence; others objected only slightly in advance of the majority of their compatriots to this particular war.

Some of them were fortified in their resistance to serving in the Armed Forces during the Vietnam conflict by the distinction Judaism makes between a "just war" and an "unjust war" or by the imperative to refrain from participating in a war regarded by the individual as immoral. Neither all who served nor those who chose alternative paths were necessarily motivated by the highest of moral values. Nevertheless, since any but a total amnesty poses great delays and almost insurmountable obstacles to the achievement of justice, we call upon the President or Congress of the United States to grant unconditional amnesty as an act both of reconciliation and compassion that can speedily help to reunite the people of the United States for the key tasks of justice, reconstruction and development which lie ahead, both in this and other countries.