



A Prophetic Call for Justice and Peace in Palestine

*Issued by the Executive Leaders of
the United Church of Christ*

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“They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace.” (Jeremiah 6:14)

Throughout the history of humankind, generations have witnessed the trauma of wars and killings, actions that denied the humanity of some, by the cruelty of others. These days are no different. Wars rage among us. Currently there are over 100 conflicts documented globally. Even modern war has its rules of engagement, conventions written to ensure the safety of those whose lives are threatened by escalating situations of conflict.

Well before these days of social media, even to Biblical times the world has witnessed and documented the ways in which communities and people - identified as less than, different from, or in other ways deemed problematic - were targeted and annihilated during armed conflict. In each case, the world watched from a distance, counting the dead and identifying mass graves in the aftermath, with the resolve that genocide would not occur again. The historical record shows the resolution to prevent these actions from repeating among us has not been kept.

Once again, the world is witnessing escalating deaths due to armed conflict. The death toll in Gaza continues to rise with almost 40,000 Palestinians dead and thousands missing. We are counting the dead daily and pleading for the killing to end and the war to cease. The Gaza Strip is the size of Las Vegas with three times the population. The investment of resources and weapons acquired and used by the Israeli army - overwhelmingly supplied by the United States - are signs of the intent to bring about the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people and destruction of their society.

Where is the threshold at which the world will say “enough” as we watch children dying of starvation because the delivery of humanitarian aid is being prevented and is stopped or destroyed, and not allowed to get to them? Where is the line at which we will be compelled to name that the killing of civilians is disproportionately high in the veiled quest for defense, disguised as the pursuit of justice, following the events of October 7, 2023? And when will the world come to terms with the consequences of this long-standing conflict, the oppression of the Palestinian people by Israeli military forces, the on-going illegal occupation and denial of the human rights of Palestinians, and discrimination which amounts to the crime of apartheid?

Rwandans. Cambodians. Armenians. Darfuris. These are among the millions killed over the centuries while outcries for the attention and intervention of global leaders were ignored.

These are now a part of the historical record, times when the world did not intervene, places where the cries of the people went unheard, and the perpetrators not held accountable for committing genocide. Over the last nine months, we have witnessed the atrocities as they have occurred in Palestine, horrors that could have and can be stopped if global leaders and public pressure demand it. As people of faith, we cannot be silent, waiting for the years to pass to verify that Israel is perpetrating genocide against Palestinians.

We call for an end to this genocide.

We call for the end to Israel's war in the Middle East.

We call for the return of all Israeli hostages and Palestinian detainees.

We call for humanitarian corridors to be open, and that abundant relief - including food, water, medical supplies, and care - immediately and safely be provided to those in need.

We call on U.S. policymakers and governments of all nations to end the sale of weapons to Israel and withhold all military aid.

We call for the identification and prosecution of those responsible for the deaths of civilians and support the call from the International Criminal Court prosecutor for warrants for the arrest of Israeli and Hamas leaders.

We call on the United Nations General Assembly to take clear and decisive action in support of the advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice on July 19, 2024, that Israel's occupation of Palestinian land is illegal and should end immediately, that the international community must not recognize Israel's unlawful presence, and that the UN consider ways to end this illegal occupation.

We call for root causes and historical claims to be addressed so that a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians is finally achieved, Israel's systems of apartheid are dismantled, and the national, human, and civil rights of Palestinians are fully realized.

We call upon the global community to hold Israeli leaders accountable for Palestinian losses, including the necessary reparatory justice Palestinians are owed, even as we recognize there is no way to recover lives, homes, and communities.

We call the church to confession, recognizing the church has been complicit, with some churches promoting theologies which justify violence, emphasize superiority, privilege, and supremacy, and support harmful colonial acts.

The historical record will show that global leaders were once again complicit in their silence and inactive in their witness to atrocities and crimes against humanity, failing to uphold the international "norms" for war and conventions they established.

The United Church of Christ has had a missional presence in the Middle East for two centuries. Our relationships with partners in the Middle East today are ones of steadfast support, critical presence, and mutual blessing. The voices and experiences of our partners in Palestine and the region today compel us to speak clearly and courageously amid horrific suffering. As people of faith, and as a Just Peace Church, we cannot claim peace as our prayer if we are not willing to boldly name the injustices we see.

We call upon all to be courageous peacemakers in this moment.

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