“I’ve lived through three wars in Gaza and I’ve seen nothing like this. The destruction is everywhere. I can’t describe the horror and fear we feel… The innocent in Gaza and Israel are dying. Men, women and children who have done nothing wrong. We ask God to inspire the war decision makers of Hamas and Israel to stop this new tragedy as there will be no winner in this war.” These are the words of Suhaila Tarazi, Director of Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City.

The hospital is a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) partner through Global Ministries, and a front-line responder in the ongoing violence in the region.

What began as a peaceful demonstration to oppose the eviction of several Palestinian families from the Shaikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem led to a violent crackdown by Israeli police, and the situation escalated rapidly. Since May 10, more than 228 people have been killed in Palestine—many of them women and at least 67 children—as the result of Israeli airstrikes on the Gaza Strip. Authorities place the death toll at 12 in Israel.

*Week of Compassion is responding to the complex and evolving situation, supporting our partners as they work to meet immediate needs and also issue urgent calls to end the violence.*

Peter Makari, Global Ministries Executive for the Middle East and Europe, notes that “infrastructure is essentially knocked out. Gaza is the most densely populated area in the world; they have regular electricity cuts and to require fuel for generators is normal. Cuts to internet, inability to communicate with the world, plus lack of basic needs like potable water and access to food and livelihood—all of these things are the reality when there isn’t such an assault. ” As the violence escalates, infrastructure is being destroyed and these critical resources are even more difficult to attain.

The healthcare system in Gaza has already been overwhelmed by the pandemic. Many clinics and hospitals closed during the pandemic and never reopened. Hospitals were already at full occupancy with COVID patients, facing severe shortages of medical supplies, medicine, and blood. This escalating violence pushes Gaza’s healthcare system way past the breaking point. Many facilities have been damaged in the bombing, and many have had to close.
And yet, Ahli Arab Hospital remains open, trying desperately to serve its usual patients and cope with the arrival of casualties of bombings. Ahli opened a new surgery ward on Wednesday to treat the wounded. With no electricity in Gaza now, the hospital must operate its generators around the clock. Ahli needs medical supplies, medicines, and fuel to power its generators.

Initial response is focused on supporting these immediate, critical needs of the hospital. Week of Compassion Executive Director Rev. Vy Nguyen shares, “When I visited the hospital in Gaza in 2019, the hospital wasn't that big or fancy. But the critical care they provide throughout the year, and especially right now with COVID-19 and the ongoing bombing, is just extraordinary. The staff and leadership there have been working tirelessly to provide for the medical needs of the injured during this difficult time.”

Archbishop Rev. Hosam E. Naoum shares that “In the midst of ongoing violence, injury, and loss of life, the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem is continuing its Christian mission of bringing healing to the wounded, relief to those who have lost their homes and livelihoods, and comfort to those who mourn the loss of loved ones...but they are overwhelmed, and need support for fuel for hospital generators, and to purchase emergency medicine and medical supplies.”

Week of Compassion is responding to the needs and providing emergency grants for the hospital to be able to provide medical relief to the injured.

Archbishop Naoum also says, “We know from sad experience that violence and hatred will never lead to solutions to the deep ethnic and religious divisions that have afflicted this region now for a century. We therefore call upon the authorities on both sides to agree to an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza conflict in order to end the reign of death and destruction that has had tragic consequences for thousands of individuals and families.”

The hospital itself reflects the diverse reality of Gaza and serves the whole community, people of all backgrounds and faith, without discrimination. This is “a small Christian community in Gaza that is living out its calling,” says Peter Makari.

The short term response is focused on immediate action and needs. But the long-term response includes a call for justice. This call has been ongoing for many years. Our partners are very concerned, and eager for the world to engage in this moment. There is a cry from our Palestinian Christian partners to get the world’s attention and and encourage decision-makers to lead with a humane approach.

We add our prayers to that of Archbishop Naoum, and invite all Disciples to pray for those affected by this violence as well:

"Almighty and Everlasting God: Our days are in your hands; we lift up all those in the Holy Land who are victims of violence and injustice, that you might empower your Church to bring healing to the wounded, relief to the suffering, and comfort to those who mourn; we pray also that you would soften the hearts of all those involved in the recent conflicts, that they would be led to work for justice and lasting peace in the land where your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ first came to bring hope and abundant life to all people; these things we ask in his Holy Name. Amen.”

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For an interactive map of responses, visit our website.
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.

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