

## **Letter in Support of Palestine / Israel**

As Bishops of the United Methodist Church, our hearts break as the devastating conflict in Palestine / Israel escalates with the collapse of the recent ceasefire. Gazans are again enduring shattering loss of life and severe injuries, especially among children. The destruction of infrastructure that helps support basic life services continues unabated. At the same time, displacement of tens of thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank goes unnoticed by much of the world as the number of unlawfully detained Palestinians rises. And, for Israeli families aching for the release of hostages, their agonizing wait continues.

The way to justice and peace for Palestinians and Israelis will not be found in acts of war, displacement, mass expulsion, or genocide. In fact, the prophet Isaiah proclaims that the way to peace is found as God judges, “between the nations and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war anymore.” (Is 2:4)

We therefore urge all governments and parties to work to immediately reinstate the ceasefire, negotiating the release of captives held by either side, to end the displacement of Palestinians in the West Bank and destruction of refugee camps’ infrastructure, to initiate a massive global humanitarian response for the rebuilding of Gaza, and to finally do the hard work of creating a just, durable and lasting peace agreement for the safety, security, and well-being of Palestinians and Israelis alike.

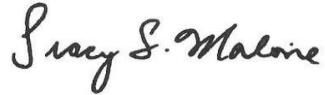
We will stand with our ecumenical colleagues, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, who condemned any call for or attempt to engage in a mass deportation of Gazans, stripping people of ‘whatever is left of their homes, their heritage, and their right to remain in the land that forms the essence of their identity.’ Any attempt at ethnic cleansing by Israel, and supported by the US and other governments, through the forced transfer of millions of Palestinians from their homeland, must be resisted and considered a crime against humanity under international law.

We also call for the US and other governments to return funding to UNRWA that continues to be an indispensable organization through which humanitarian

response and rebuilding of Gaza can be coordinated and implemented. The need to provide immediate health care, food, water, electricity, housing, and other life-saving essentials is a critical need and will be the foundation for any just peace. We also urge United Methodists to support relief efforts in Gaza by designating “Gaza” on gifts to UMCOR’s international disaster response and recovery efforts.

Finally, we call on United Methodists worldwide to convey these concerns to their governments and to continue to pray for the softening of the hearts of the powerful and for the protection of the vulnerable so that immediate suffering might end and a just peace will finally be the gift to all parties.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tracy S. Malone".

Bishop Tracy S. Malone  
President, Council of Bishops  
The United Methodist Church