



For Immediate Release

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

United Methodist Bishops Call for Cease Fire in Gaza

“Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God”
Matthew 5:9 NLT

As bishops of The United Methodist Church, we call for an immediate and permanent cease-fire in the conflict between Hamas and Israel in Gaza and pledge our prayers and commitment to work for a durable peace for Israelis, Palestinians, and all in the region.

As United Methodists, we join others in encouraging, *“...diplomatic initiatives that will engage both Israelis and Palestinians in an effort to understand the fears, hopes, and aspirations of each other. Such strategies should actively seek a way to promote a just and lasting peace and cooperation that will lead to a two-State solution...an end to the current occupation and violence, and the creation of a viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace with Israel...”*¹

On October 7, 2023, an attack by Hamas left 1,200 Israelis dead and hundreds of hostages taken. Since then, more than 30,000 have been killed by Israel’s bombardment of Gaza, the majority of them women and children. Innocent people continue to be killed because of the fighting, and many are dying of hunger and the spread of infectious disease.

The ability of aid organizations to attend to the critical needs of the victims of this prolonged war has also been sharply limited by the lack of meaningful negotiations. On February 29, starving Palestinians were fired upon as they sought food from an aid truck, with more than 100 persons killed by Israeli forces. It is estimated that 1.8 million Palestinians have been displaced, their homes and communities destroyed. The United Nations estimates that more than half a million people are living under “catastrophic levels of deprivation and starvation.”

We believe that the current military strategy of the Israeli government, supported by U.S. weapons transfers and aid, will only lead to the destruction of the entire Gaza Strip, an unconscionable death toll that grows daily, the perpetuation of one of the world’s longest conflicts, and the proliferation of increased enmity between Israelis and Palestinians, which has historically led to an increase in the militarization on both sides. There is no peace to be found in this strategy.

The lack of a true cease-fire after more than five months of this deadly conflict compels us to raise our voices now. We call for an immediate and permanent cease-fire in the Gaza Strip and a commitment from all involved parties, including Israel, Palestinians, surrounding Middle East countries, the U.S., and others to pursue a lasting peace.

We pledge our prayers and commitment to work for a durable peace, an end to the violence and the release of the hostages.

¹ A Pathway for Peace in Palestine and Israel, *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church – 2016*