

October 12th, 2023

Dear Members of Congress,

We have watched in sadness the devastating loss of life in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories over the last several days. As Church based denominations and organizations with deep ties to the Holy Land, we mourn with our Israeli and Palestinian siblings as they grieve the loss of loved ones and remain fearful of continued violence. Our commitment remains to a future in which both Israelis and Palestinians can live in peace, with security and human rights protected for all.

We unequivocally condemn Hamas' attacks and violent treatment of civilians and call for the immediate release of all hostages in captivity. We also condemn the indiscriminate and violent Israeli response that has already claimed hundreds of civilian lives. The Israeli government's decision to shut off power, water, and fuel will have a disastrous impact on millions of civilians in Gaza, including over a million children, especially those who need immediate medical attention.

At this critical time it is incumbent upon Congress to act in ways that will help de-escalate the violence and stop further loss of life. Specifically, we call on Congress to:

1. Publicly call for ceasefire, de-escalation and restraint by all sides
2. Call on all parties to abide by the laws of war, including the Geneva conventions and customary international law
3. Prioritize steps to secure immediate release of hostages and ensure international protection for civilians

During this time of heightened tension, we implore Congress to refrain from steps that only exacerbate the violence and increase the risk of expanding war into the broader region. Any Congressional effort that is one-sided, and rushes to send new weapons to Israel, will only intensify the conflict leading to further deaths and destruction. Congress must work to prevent the spread of more violence, including against Palestinian civilians in Israel and the West Bank.

Year after year, we have seen that increasing violence begets more violence. Our past responses have failed to end the bloodshed. As these horrific events unfold, we are reminded once again that only by addressing core systemic issues, including decades of institutionalized oppression and collective punishment of Palestinians through brutal military occupation and a 16-year Gaza blockade, will Israelis and Palestinians live in peace.

We are grateful for your service to this country. We pray for wisdom and discernment on your behalf in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Baptists
American Baptist Churches USA
American Friends Service Committee
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Churches for Middle East Peace
Church of the Brethren
Community of Christ
Church World Service
Evangelicals4Justice
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Fellowship of Reconciliation USA
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Global Ministries
Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention

Maryknoll Office for Global
Mennonite Central Committee
National Council of Churches
Pax Christi USA
Presbyterian Church USA Office of Public Witness
Quixote Center
Reformed Church in America
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Institute Leadership Team
Sojourners
The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society
United Church of Christ
United Women in Faith