

A Call to Our Church in a Time of Moral Reckoning: UMKR Responds to the War in Palestine/Israel

United Methodists in UMKR, like so many throughout our church, are weeping for the people of the Holy Land. We decry the indiscriminate attacks on all civilians, both Israelis and Palestinians. We mourn with those who are grieving for the dead, we suffer for those who are injured, starving, or living in fear today, and we seek the safe release of all the political captives held by both the state of Israel and Hamas. We pray fervently for the millions in Gaza who are living through the ghastly terror of a genocidal military assault.

UMKR deplores the targeting of unarmed Israeli civilians during the Hamas military attack on October 7. It was a criminal act committed by a militant force that has emerged from a brutally oppressed population, terrorized for decades by a frighteningly powerful apartheid state with the permission and aid of the world's mightiest nations.

Clearly, that attack cannot be depicted truthfully as "unprovoked," as it has been [so often described](#). We are shocked by the hypocrisy and disinformation in worldwide responses to and reporting of these events.

We are aware of Israel's [expertise](#) in creating [disinformation](#) that exonerates Israel and [accuses or defames Palestinians](#). In that vein, we note the reports of atrocities committed by Hamas that have no confirmation, and [contested evidence](#) that [purportedly clears](#) Israel of responsibility for the bombing of Al Ahli hospital. We concur with [Israeli citizens](#) who are demanding an independent commission and trustworthy information.

We are disturbed by the outpouring of selective moral outrage from so many Western government leaders and flooding mainstream and social media, depicting the events of October 7 in a historical vacuum and serving to promote retribution against millions of Palestinians who have long been Israel's invisible victims.

The world must see those victims now, the millions who are living under a brutal military occupation and racist apartheid regime that subjects them to savage violence every day throughout the year, year after year. We must hear their cries, in the West Bank, inside Israel, and especially in Gaza.

Gaza, often called "[an open-air prison](#)," a place the United Nations said would be "uninhabitable" by 2020. Gaza, which the UN Secretary-General, after he visited in 2021, called "hell on earth" for children. All due to Israel's inhuman 16-year-long blockade.

Where has been the outrage from politicians and journalists at Israel's shocking violence against Palestinians? Do they truly not know about these daily crimes against a subjugated population? Or do they not see Palestinians as fully human individuals who suffer as we all do, who deserve the same compassion and defense we would want for ourselves?

In Gaza today, scores of Palestinian families have been entirely erased in this current Israeli assault, and the death toll in Gaza is rising alarmingly every day, with over 9000 Palestinians killed, [more than 40% of whom are children](#), not including thousands that are buried in the rubble of buildings. Almost 1.5 million are now internal refugees. Virtually all medical facilities are destroyed or non-functioning. There are no safe havens for civilians.

In the [West Bank](#), while the world's eyes are turned elsewhere, Israeli forces are on the attack, and Israeli settlers, armed by the Israeli government, are rampaging freely in [Palestinian communities](#). Well over 100 Palestinians have been killed, including more than 30 children; hundreds have been [terrorized into fleeing their communities](#), land that settlers want to seize. In both the West Bank and Gaza, we are seeing the continuation of 75 years of ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their historic homeland, which Israel [will want to make permanent](#).

Contributing to these escalating crimes is the dehumanizing and murderous language from Israeli government leaders, this month and in recent years: calling Palestinians "human animals," "cockroaches that should be crushed" and "snakes that should be killed," admitting that, in the assault on Gaza's civilians, "the emphasis is on damage, and not on accuracy," boasting that Israel will turn Gaza into "an island of ruins," claiming "the children of Gaza brought [this genocidal attack] upon themselves," and stating that this war is a "struggle between the children of light and the children of darkness."

Israel's retribution against 2.2 million helpless civilians in Gaza is revenge born of national rage, pain, and humiliation. It is also a "textbook case of genocide," according to an [expert in this field](#). Yet the United States and other world powers are ready to support and strengthen this monstrous assault with weapons, military advisors, and naval support.

God's people dare not stand by and watch. We dare not be silent or carry on with life as usual while the United States provides support and encouragement for Israel to continue and expand this genocidal horror. As [Rabbi Brant Rosen](#) has written recently, we and the world are faced with what may be **"the greatest moral reckoning of our time."**

Throughout the Hebrew and Christian testaments, we are told that God [stands with the oppressed](#), and God's people are called to [defend those who are oppressed](#) by the powerful, whoever they may be.

THEREFORE, to answer that prophetic call in this hour of moral reckoning:

WE HEAR the cry of Palestinian Christian leaders in ["A Call for Repentance"](#) and with them we "categorically reject the myopic and distorted Christian responses that ignore the wider context and the root causes of this war."

WE COMMEND with gratitude [the civil disobedience](#) at the U.S. capitol on October 18, 2023 and [subsequent actions](#) by thousands of Jewish Americans in Jewish Voice for Peace, If Not Now, and other Jewish organizations calling for a ceasefire.

WE ABHOR the racist dehumanization and demonization of Palestinians and the disregard for their lives pervading both Israeli and Western governments, media, and society.

WE REJECT and will resist efforts in our societies, our governments, and our communities to silence, punish, or defame Palestinian and other advocates for justice in the Holy Land.

WE AFFIRM that the Palestinian people have long embraced nonviolent resistance and practiced it in many forms, including appeals to the United Nations and the International Criminal Court and the successful, nonviolent [Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions \(BDS\) movement](#), efforts that have been condemned and vehemently opposed by Israel, the U.S. and other world powers. We see that Palestinians and their advocates are vilified and punished for every method of opposing Israeli apartheid and settler-colonialism.

WE IMPLORE the United States government to be a true friend to Israel and the world and an even-handed broker for peace by requiring Israel also to answer for its crimes and by demanding that Israel engage in authentic peace negotiations, while ensuring equal status and leverage for Palestinians at the negotiating table.

WE CONFESS that our governments, our societies, and our institutions, including our church and our own movement, have failed the people of Palestine and Israel and that we all bear some responsibility for this current carnage. None of us dare claim innocence or retire to the role of mere bystanders.

FINALLY, WE CALL ON ALL UNITED METHODISTS to bring our deeply held values, our courage, and our compassion to this time of reckoning, doing everything we can to end this catastrophic genocide in the Holy Land and to support justice-based solutions for all the people of that land.

In the words of the prophet Isaiah, let us “learn to do right; seek justice; defend the oppressed.” (Isaiah 1:17).

CONTACT [U.S. leaders today](#) to call for an immediate ceasefire, ample humanitarian aid, an exchange of political captives, and protections in the West Bank.

JOIN [public actions in the U.S.](#) and [globally](#) that broadcast public support for Palestinian human rights to our communities and our leaders.

SUPPORT [humanitarian aid](#) with a contribution to reliable providers with access in Gaza.

PRAY [without ceasing](#) for the physical and spiritual welfare of all Israelis and Palestinians, for their leaders and the world’s leaders to act with wisdom and compassion.

HELP [others to understand](#) the causes and conditions that have led to today’s violence

SPEAK BOLDLY for the humanity and the human rights of the Palestinian people, in your church, your family, and your community.

BECOME PART OF THE SOLUTION in all the ways you can; [support the movement](#) for Palestinian human rights to achieve a just and lasting peace in Israel/Palestine.

Even in this bleak time, we remain certain that the just cause of Palestinian liberation will be successful. This current crisis is a wakeup call for those in power who thought the aspirations of the Palestinian people for freedom and equality could be forever ignored. In recent years, Israel’s apartheid regime has been [irreversibly exposed](#), and all those who continue to normalize and support that regime will find they are on the wrong side of history, just as they did with apartheid South Africa.

So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. (Galatians 6:9)

This United Methodist [grassroots justice movement](#), [UMKR](#), working with faith and civil society partners throughout the U.S. and the world, is helping those in power to see and pursue the path toward justice. We are guided by the [Kairos Palestine call](#) from Palestinian Christians and inspired by the quality of character for which Palestinians are renowned: “sumud” - steadfastness. As they remain steadfast in their homeland and the knowledge of their just cause, we invite United Methodists to join us in standing with them in meaningful solidarity. Contact us at info@kairosresponse.org.