

**Call for an Immediate Israeli-Palestinian Ceasefire**

The violent carnage cannot go on! The killing and injuring of innocent civilians in Gaza as well as and in Israel must stop.

Israeli airstrikes must end along with further threats of increased military action. Palestinian militant groups must also cease all current and future attacks on Israel. Violence only breeds more violence and impedes the path that leads to lasting peace.

The “right to self defense” can never be an excuse to inflict violence and wanton destruction to civilian communities. It is morally unjustifiable and it is against international law.

The CCM supports the call of the World Council of Churches for an immediate negotiated ceasefire between the political leaders in Israel and Gaza.

They must ensure that all measures are taken to protect civilians and for international relief agencies to have unfettered access to provide the humanitarian aid urgently required.

The CCM also supports the call of the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ah-

mad Badawi, for the United Nations to hold a special session on resolving the current crisis in Gaza.

The CCM calls upon all its member churches to pray for the progress of peace negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, with the accompaniment and full support of peace-loving countries around the world.

The CCM also calls upon all powerful nations of the West to exert pressure to stop Israel from using violence disproportionately executed upon the helpless Palestinians.

A special Gaza Humanitarian Fund has been set-up in order that churches can contribute generously to help churches in Gaza to assist in humanitarian relief by funds provided by international Christian funders.

Cheques are to be made out in favour of “Council of Churches of Malaysia” and to be written at the back “Gaza Humanitarian Relief Funds”.

**Rev. Dr. Hermen Shastri**  
General Secretary  
Council of Churches  
of Malaysia  
8 January 2009

**NECF Prayer Statement on Israel-Palestine Conflict**

As an evangelical Christian organisation in Malaysia committed to the full authority of our holy scriptures, we are compelled to call on all member churches to pray earnestly and without ceasing for the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict that has claimed over 900 lives thus far.

It is indeed alarming and distressing to read, hear and see news reports highlighting the suffering and hardship endured by the people, especially the Palestinians, as well as the death of innocent civilians, many of whom are women and children, arising from the violent aggression of Israel’s military power.

The Bible clearly teaches that God longs for justice and peace for all people, irrespective of race, creed or nationhood. We believe that the principles of peace and justice, so powerfully spoken by the Hebrew prophets, are applicable and relevant to all nations and all people of the world in this time of crisis in the Middle East. The Bible also speaks of humans being created in the image of God and that all are vested with human dignity. As such, all human being whether Jews

or Palestinian have equal rights to life, liberty and livelihood. The atrocities in this war in the Middle East have caused much destruction and loss of innocent lives which go against the grain of human dignity.

We are therefore compelled to pray to our Lord for His mighty intervention for a cessation to the war and Israel’s violent aggression. We enjoined all to pray and intercede to our great God who according to Ps.46:9 is the one who “makes wars cease to the end of the earth.” We pray for a fair, negotiated solution for both the Israelis and Palestinians that will usher in lasting peace, harmony and justice for all people, be they Jews or Palestinians, and for the two nation states involved in the conflict.

We call on all evangelicals, all Christians, and everyone of good will to join us to pray faithfully in the coming days and months ahead for the following:-

1. That God will intervene and in His own sovereign way bring about a just, lasting solution of peace and harmony in the conflict between the two nation states of

Israel and Palestine;

2. That the Lord will be moved and act in this critical moment for a ceasefire between the two nation states so that no more lives are lost as a result of the war and that the sufferings of the people of the two nations, especially the Palestinians, will be alleviated.
3. That humanitarian assistance and aid in the form of food, medical personnel and supplies will directly and quickly reach the victims of the war and for their benefit; and
4. That all quarters, including the United States government and the United Nations, will resolve and do their utmost to bring about an end to this conflict, thus preventing more loss of lives and suffering to the people.

**NECF Malaysia**  
14 January 2009

**Press Release Call For Prayer Over The Gaza Situation**

We are heartened by the Prime Minister’s call for prayers to be held in all mosques for peace in Palestine (NST. 9 Jan. 2009) and we call upon all other Religious-minded People to pray for peace in Palestine.

We pray that God will soften the hearts of the leaders to avoid the sledgehammer tactics of Israel or the provocative acts of Hamas which only further the sufferings of innocent people in Palestine.

We hope that prayer vigils can be organised rather than vociferous demonstrations that only serve to enrage people. We have asked our priests to organise prayer vigils in our parishes.

The God in whom we all believe in, is a God of Peace and he grants it to those who observe His laws of love and respect for one another as brothers and sisters.

**Most Reverend Tan Sri Datuk Murphy Pakiam**  
Roman Catholic Archbishop  
of Kuala Lumpur  
9 January 2009

**Letter from the general secretary to WCC member churches in the Middle East**

Geneva, 7 January 2009

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We are sending this letter as a word of encouragement to churches in the Middle East and sharing it with member churches around the world.

The international ecumenical family has heard your calls and is listening to your concerns over the crisis surrounding Gaza. It is fitting that, in these very weeks, the ecumenical prayer cycle invites believers in many lands to pray for the churches of the Middle East and for all the peoples among whom you serve. May the homeland of Jesus find the peace promised in the Christmas message and may God protect you and all your neighbours from the spiral of violence, antagonism and retribution now gripping Gaza and Israel.

We have heard the call for peace in the recent statement of the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem and agree that both parties to the conflict must

“return to their senses and refrain from all violent acts, which only bring destruction and tragedy”. We join the churches in Jerusalem in their appeal to the international community finally to “resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with a just and comprehensive solution based on international resolutions.”

In company with member churches, other ecumenical agencies and partners in the international community, the World Council of Churches is calling for an end to hostilities and a new commitment to a negotiated settlement that will assure a just and lasting peace to both Palestinians and Israelis. Such a peace must include respect by all authorities for international law as it applies to human rights, humanitarian aid and protection of civilians in conflict zones. It must reinstate the ceasefire on both sides of the border and speed the lifting of Israel’s blockade on Gaza.

All who receive this letter are invited to pray a prayer for peace from Palestine and Israel (see the end of

this letter, or online). Please share it so that our community may pray to God with one voice.

The WCC is also asking churches and ministries to share information about actions they are taking at this time to promote peace with justice.

We will continue to advocate practical action for peace on the part of governments, the Arab League, the European Union and the United Nations. “Raise your voices...speak ‘truth to power’ and name with courage the injustices we see and experience,” the Amman Call challenges us all. “The illegal occupation has stolen two generations of lives... and threatens the next with hopelessness and rage,” it continues, reminding at this time that half of Gaza’s 1.5 million people are under 18 years of age.

Today’s crisis is much deeper than rockets and retaliation. As the central committee of the World Council of Churches noted early last year:

The humanitarian, human rights and political situation of the people of Gaza has been grave for years and is steadily worsening. The logic of policies imposed upon this tiny strip of territory is being pushed to new extremes. Public order is further threatened by pressures from within. The horizon for those who live in one of the most densely populated places on earth seems to shrink by the day.

Through all the days of 2008, the situation grew worse. Now, we are calling on Christians everywhere to pray for peace and, wherever possible, to inspire and encourage their leaders in the constructive work that leads beyond enmity to reconciliation. As a new year dawns, we pray for you with a prayer from Palestine and Israel.

God of mercy and compassion,  
Of grace and reconciliation,  
Pour your power upon all your children in the Middle East.  
Let hatred be turned into love, fear to trust,

Despair to hope, oppression to freedom,  
Occupation to liberation,  
That violent encounters may be replaced by loving embraces,  
And peace and justice could be experienced by all.  
Amen.

From Imagine Peace, a devotional resource from the WCC Decade to Overcome Violence, 2008.

Yours in Christian love and service,

**The Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia**  
General secretary of the  
World Council of Churches

**In the Name of God, end the siege over Gaza**

One and a half million people imprisoned and without proper food or medicine. 800,000 without electricity supply; this is illegal collective punishment, an immoral act in violation of the basic human and natural laws as well as International Law. It cannot be tolerated anymore. The siege over Gaza should end now.

**Voices from our people there say “We feel the threat of being exterminated by this siege”**

In the Name of God, we, the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem and the Holy Land urge the International Community, President Bush and the leaders of Israel, to put an end to this suffering and call upon Israel to activate Prime Minister Salam Fayyad’s initiative for Palestinian responsibility control of the borders thus ensuring sufficient normal flow of medicine, food, fuel and goods to Gaza.

We urge the International Community and the European Union to act according to their recent pleas. There is no time to waste when Human life is endangered.

We urge the Palestinian Leadership to unite in ending their differences for the sake of their people in Gaza. Put the differences aside and deal with this crisis for the good of all human beings demonstrating that you care for your brothers and sisters who have suffered enough already. We would say to all concerned parties; while ever you persist in firing rockets into Israel you encourage public opinion outside this Land to feel there is a justification for this siege.

We urge Israel to act responsibly and to immediately end this inhuman siege. To deny children and civilians their necessary basic commodities are not the ways to security but rather throw the region into further and more dangerous deteriorations. This siege will not guarantee the end to rocket firing, but will only increase the bitterness and suffering and invite more revenge, while the innocents keep dying. True Peace building is the only way to bring the desired security.

We pray for the day when the people of Gaza will be free from Occupation, from political differences, from violence and from despair. We pray for the Israelis and Palestinians to respect human life and God’s love for every human life, and to take all possible measures to end this suffering. Only bold steps towards just Peace and ending the violence will protect the Human life and dignity of both People.

With the Prophet we keep praying and hoping;

“ A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.

In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth.

In his law the islands will put their hope” (Isaiah 42:3-4)

**Heads of Churches in Jerusalem and the Holy Land**

**WEA: The Conflict in Gaza**

*Open Letter to Government, community and Evangelical Christian Leaders*

This appeal for peace by the WEA leadership is made on behalf of all those affected by the conflict, both Israeli and Gazan residents alike. May the God who gives peace to all who ask, grant this request to the populations living in Israel and Gaza. The WEA urges all its members to pray for God’s peace to reign in the Holy Land.

The WEA, which represents Christians in Israel as well as in Gaza, has been following with deep concern the events unfolding in Israel and the Gaza Strip. The destruction in Israel and Gaza to lives and material is heart-rending. We are concerned for our evangelical Christian communities living through this conflict on both sides. We are concerned for all those who will live in the aftermath of this war. We pray for those who have lost loved ones as well as those who have caused lives to be lost. We know that the God who heals and forgives longs to restore and rebuild the broken-hearted. Our prayers are with all. We appeal to those in leadership to do their

utmost to end all hostilities and consequent violence. We appeal to all parties to come before God the giver of life and wisdom who freely gives wisdom to those who ask. We appeal to all decision-makers to listen to the voice of reason within their own ranks and to do their utmost to ensure that what is happening does not repeat itself.

We also call upon the international community to carefully but resolutely respond to the crisis. The feelings on the ground are highly sensitive; it is not a time to blame but to respond with concern for all who are undergoing trauma. We appeal to the international community to work hard to bring an end to the current crisis and make every effort to remove all the causes of this conflict.

It is hard to imagine that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be resolved at all. We understand that it is extremely complex and that it needs a lot of work to build up trust and the political will on all sides. However, we dare to dream together of a Middle East where Jews and Arabs are able to enjoy life side by side in peace.

The God who is near wants

to bless the Jewish people but not at the expense of the Arab people and He wants to bless the Arab people but not at the expense of the Jewish people. We all call Abraham, the friend of God, also the father of our faith. For his sake and the sake of our God may this conflict raise us up to a place where God pours His love for each person into all our hearts. May this inspire those who make political decisions as well as the families, especially those who have lost loved ones. Let their deaths not be in vain but be the cause of a better world, for the glory of God.

We call on all who are concerned to fast and pray for peace in the Middle East. Specifically we would request that those in the World Evangelical Alliance global family devote time to pray for this crisis during this week in which many Alliances worldwide are celebrating their annual prayer week and especially on Sunday, January 18th, 2009. In addition, we would ask that churches and individual Christians respond generously to the humanitarian disaster created by this conflict.

**Dr. Geoff Tunnicliffe,**  
World Evangelical Alliance  
International  
Director Reverend Harry Tees,  
WEA Ambassador to the Holy  
Land

**LWF Reiterates Support for Holy Land Vision of Peace, Urges Ceasefire in Gaza**

*Noko Calls for Prayers, Advocacy, as North American Lutheran Bishops Visit Middle East*

GENEVA, 6 January 2009 (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) reiterates its commitment to a vision of peace for both Israelis and Palestinians, urging an immediate cessation of both Israeli military operations on Gaza and Hamas missile attacks on southern Israel, and the swift establishment of a workable ceasefire agreement.

In a statement released today, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko says, “The present bloodshed and destruction will not secure peace for either Israelis or Palestinians. It will only plant the seeds for more conflict, marginalizing the peacemakers, breeding despair, promoting radicalization and strengthening the appeal of violence.”

Reports citing local medical sources put the Palestinian death toll at more than 550 and nearly 3,000 civilian injuries, since Israel launched its 27 December operation on Gaza, including ground

assaults since 3 January, aimed at stopping Hamas militants from firing rockets and mortars into southern Israel. Hamas says it has killed five Israelis by rocket fire and in combat.

Pointing to the impact of the Israeli siege on the entire civilian population of Gaza during the six-month ceasefire, Noko notes the blockade “imposed severe suffering on the entire civilian population of Gaza, fostering despair and rage rather than promoting an atmosphere for negotiations and peace.” He adds however, that attacks by Hamas and other militant organizations “are condemned by the LWF as an unacceptable response threatening the lives of another civilian population.” Equally, while Israel has an obligation to protect its people and territory, its current military operations “are disproportionate to the actual threat and have resulted in an intolerable number of civilian deaths and injuries.”

The general secretary expresses grave concern for the critical humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, urging the Israeli govern-

ment to ensure full humanitarian access to the people compelled to survive this conflict “without electricity, medical supplies, or sufficient food or water.”

Citing the LWF’s long-standing support to its member church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) in various activities fostering the establishment of peace with justice in the Holy Land, Noko insists the root cause of the Middle East conflict must be addressed. “The interpretation of God’s promise to Abraham and differing understandings of who may rightfully claim his legacy, which lie at the very heart of this conflict, can only be resolved by dialogue and reconciliation among all his children,” he says.

He criticizes both parties’ short-sighted focus on political gains through “displays of armed power,” rather than on the “difficult search for peace,” saying this approach was a betrayal of the Israeli and Palestinian “peoples’ hopes for a peaceful future.”

Noko released his statement as a delegation of bishops from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, led by LWF President Bishop Mark S. Hanson, proceeded with their visits with Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian religious, community and political leaders under an annual event hosted by the ELCJHL. (See separate story at: [www.lutheranworld.org/News/LWI/EN/2317.EN.html](http://www.lutheranworld.org/News/LWI/EN/2317.EN.html))

He appeals to all LWF member churches to pray for peace, advocate for justice, and convey these concerns to political leaders. “Without a just peace in the Holy Land, there can be no true or sustainable peace for any of us,” Noko concludes. (558 words)

*The full text of the general secretary’s statement is available on the LWF web site at: [www.lutheranworld.org/LWF\\_Documents/LWF-Statement\\_Gaza\\_Jan\\_2009.pdf](http://www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/LWF-Statement_Gaza_Jan_2009.pdf)*

**Archbishop's statement on Gaza**

Wednesday 31 December 2008

**The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, has made the following statement regarding the current situation in Gaza:**

The spiralling violence in Gaza tragically illustrates the fact that the cycle of mutual threat and retaliation have no lasting effect except to reinforce the misery and insecurity of everyone in the region. I want to express my grief and sympathy for the innocent lives lost in this latest phase of violence. People of all faiths in this country will want to join their voices to the statements of the Christian Muslim Forum and the Council of Christians and Jews in urging a return to the ceasefire and efforts to secure a lasting peace. We must unite in urging all those who have the power to halt this spiral of violence to do so.

Those raising the stakes through the continuation of indiscriminate violence seem to have forgotten nothing and learned nothing. It must surely be clear that, whilst peace will not wipe out the memory of all past wrongs, it is the only basis for the future flourish-

ing of both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. The recent statement by the Patriarchs and Heads of Church in Jerusalem reflects a clear awareness that there can be no winners if the current situation is allowed to persist. Its continuation can only condemn ordinary Palestinian and Israeli citizens to the prospect of another year of fear and suffering.

Urgent humanitarian needs have arisen through the attacks on Gaza and Israel and they demand a generous response to local appeals for support, such as that issued by the Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem for its hospital in Gaza. But this humanitarian response, both local and international, needs to be matched by redoubled efforts in the political sphere.

The prophet Zechariah declared, "Not by might and not by power, but by my spirit says the Lord of Hosts". The New Year is an opportunity for a new initiative that will set the tone for what lies ahead. Religious leaders, most particularly those of the region, have an urgent responsibility in sup-

porting the search for peace and reconciliation. But it is the political leaders and opinion-formers who hold the key to implementing the necessary changes that can bring hope. Can they not agree a period of truce as the New Year begins, so that the communities of the Holy Land may once again explore how common security might at last begin to replace the mechanical rhythms of mutual threat? Might the outgoing and incoming Presidents of the USA combine to make such an appeal and pursue its implementation?

The Anglican Communion worldwide stands alongside other religious communities and humanitarian organisations in its commitment to supporting any such initiative. Without such a sign of hope, the future for the Holy Land and the whole region is one of more fear, innocent suffering and destruction.

**Notes:**

The statement by The Rt Rev Nigel McCulloch, Chair of the 'Council of Christians and Jews' is available at: <http://www.ccj.org.uk/>

The statement by Imam Dr Musharraf Hussain and The Rt Revd Dr Richard Cheetham, Co-Chairs of the 'Christian Muslim Forum' is available at: <http://www.christianmuslimforum.org/subpage.asp?id=325>

The statement by the Patriarchs and Heads of Church in Jerusalem is available at: <http://www.lpj.org/news-ite2006/news/2008/12/gaza-message-en-head-schrches2008.html>

The statement by the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem about Al Ahli Arab Hospital is available at: <http://www.j-diocese.org/newsdetail.php?id=3386>