



World Council of Churches
Conseil œcuménique des Eglises
Consejo Mundial de Iglesias
Ökumenischer Rat der Kirchen
General Secretariat

Postal address: P.O. Box 2100
CH-1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland
Visiting address: 150 route de Ferney
Phone: (+41-22) 791 61 11
Fax: (+41-22) 791 03 61
General e-mail: infowcc@wcc-coe.org
Website: www.wcc-coe.org

To:

WCC Member Churches
Members of WCC Central Committee
Associate Councils
Christian World Communions
Regional Ecumenical Organizations
Specialized Ministries
International Ecumenical Organizations

Direct dial: (+41-22) 791.6285
Direct e-mail: dcb@wcc-coe.org
Direct fax: (+41-22) 791.6535

Geneva, 2 April 2009

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

It has been made painfully clear to all of us again this year that peace in the Middle East and in other parts of the world cannot be separated from the need for a just peace in Israel/Palestine.

Many member churches are again raising their voices around this long-standing concern. We would like to thank all who have done so and encourage continuing efforts. It is especially important that churches find ways to give a considered and faithful witness for peace *together*. This letter shares two such opportunities.

Follow-up actions: Gaza war and its aftermath

The WCC executive committee invites you as churches to:

- Share your concerns about the Gaza conflict with your government;
- Add your voice to calls for the independent investigation of possible violations by both sides of humanitarian law;
- Let Palestinian Christians know that you support their endeavours to promote Palestinian unity.

The enclosed **Statement on the Gaza War** notes these and other steps. Responding could mean a letter, a visit or joint actions, depending on context and capacity.

Invitation: 'World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel, 4-10 June 2009'

More and more churches are joining this annual week of action each year. It began with a handful of churches after the Porto Alegre assembly and last

year reached 40 countries. During the week, churches and specialized ministries are invited to participate in joint actions, as able:

- Prayer
- Education
- Advocacy

All participants may pray with a prayer from the churches in Jerusalem. They may also choose to reach out to parishes, the public or government. The focus is a negotiated peace that secures the legitimate rights and future of both peoples in the conflict, in keeping with decades of ecumenical and church policies.

Please read the enclosed **Invitation and Fact Sheet** for more information about this “World Week” of action. Also see www.worldweekforpeace.org.

Two months after the ceasefire, the two-year blockade of Gaza is back in place. “Access for humanitarian relief items remains a priority since efforts to resume basic services and implement humanitarian and early recovery programmes are limited in the absence of reconstruction materials and spare parts. Amounts and types of deliveries reaching Gaza continue being subject to random restrictions and unpredictable clearance procedures,” (UN OCHA report, 26/3/09). Tens of thousands of people remain homeless and most of their 20,000 destroyed or damaged dwellings are still in ruins.

Failed policies of certain key governments toward Gaza have not changed either. Please note, however, that many governments are committed to positive changes in policy. All are members of the United Nations, which has an essential role in Gaza and in the struggle for peace, and comes under much pressure as a result.

During the Gaza war more than 100 churches and ministries related to the WCC made public statements, contacted their government directly, or spoke to media. A summary is available on the WCC web site. The members of the WCC executive committee recognized this important demonstration of concern. This letter invites further prayer and action among us. May it be a sign of our service to the One who is called the Prince of Peace.

Yours in Christ,



Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia
General Secretary

Enclosures:

- Statement on the Gaza War, WCC Executive Committee, 17-20 February 2009
- Invitation and Fact Sheet for “World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel, 4-10 June 2009”