

October 15, 2024

****The below letter was sent to both the Harris and Trump Presidential campaigns ****

We write as U.S. Christian faith leaders deeply concerned by the continuing injustice, suppression of rights, and disregard for international law that has endured for decades in Israel/Palestine. Nearly a year has passed since the escalation in violence on Oct. 7, 2023, between Hamas and the Israeli military. Even as our primary focus for months has been on calling for an immediate end to the violence in Gaza and throughout Israel/Palestine, we know more must be done by the United States government to work toward a just and permanent solution that addresses the core issues so that international human rights are upheld and the most vulnerable are protected. To that end, we offer the following recommendations for what we feel must be addressed by the next administration in their first 100 days in office.

1) Protect Palestinian and Israeli civilian life: A permanent and comprehensive ceasefire is the best way to ensure the well-being of Palestinian and Israeli civilians. Regardless of whether an interim agreement is reached sooner, the next Administration will need to commit to using all its leverage, in the form of diplomatic and military incentives, to press Israel for a bilateral and permanent ceasefire. This is essential to save lives and secure the release of hostages, as well as the release of Palestinian prisoners held without due process of law.

2) Facilitate humanitarian aid: More than two-thirds of Gaza—including tens of thousands of homes, hospitals, schools, and universities—have been destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. Children are dying of malnutrition. Over 200 humanitarian aid workers have been killed in Gaza since October 2023 as a result of Israel’s military campaign. In August the first case of polio was reported in a quarter-century in a 10-month-old child. Immediate and unrestricted aid provision and access for the significant and urgently needed humanitarian response is required to affirm the God-given dignity of the people of Gaza and their rights to food, shelter, education, healthcare, and the means to support themselves. In the first 100 days, the United States must do everything in its power to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid, including by restoring funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). We also ask that you deploy United States hospital ships, and/or other medical-capable ships, to the waters off Gaza to help provide Palestinian civilians access to emergency medical care.

3) Halt arms sales and military assistance: International human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, have [documented](#) how U.S.-provided munitions have been used by Israel to kill civilians in Gaza. The United States government cannot play a proactive role in working to bring a durable and holistic peace to Israel/Palestine while it continues to supply weapons to Israel that are used in contravention of U.S. and international law. The next administration must immediately suspend lethal U.S. arms

transfers to Israel in light of repeated apparent violations of international and U.S. law and policy in Gaza and the West Bank.

4) Prioritize regional de-escalation: The ongoing military assault in Gaza has put the entire Middle East under the cloud of a regional war in Lebanon and beyond. More than 60,000 people have been displaced at the northern border of Israel. Close to 500,000 people have been displaced in southern Lebanon as a result of the Israeli military attacks. The United States must work to strengthen our engagement with regional partners to help facilitate diplomatic efforts that will open channels of constructive dialogue and protection of all civilians throughout the region, instead of further entrenching the prospect of regional war.

5) Protect Palestinian Christian communities: The viability of the Palestinian Christian community in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip has been a long-standing trend which has become even greater over the past year. In Gaza, many of the approximately 600 remaining Christians are sheltering in one of two churches in Gaza City with limited access to food, water, and medical supplies. We have grave concerns that the Christian community in Gaza faces the very real threat of complete annihilation and extinction. In Jerusalem and the West Bank, Palestinian Christians face increased violence at the hands of Israeli settlers, as well as severe economic pressures related to the conflict that otherwise threaten their livelihoods. We call for Jerusalem to be a shared city in which Jews, Muslims, and Christians can worship without fear of violence. The United States must also proactively push for Israel to de-escalate the violence, uphold religious freedom and protections for people of all faiths, including the Christian community, which is part and parcel of the Palestinian fabric.

As people of faith and leaders within religious denominations and national organizations, we call for an immediate end to the violence in the Middle East. We pray that whoever is elected President of the United States will demonstrate a robust commitment to the American values of promoting human rights and peace with their words and actions on day one. Thank you for your consideration of this urgent matter, and we look forward to working with you to achieve a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Sincerely,

Joyce Ajlouny
General Secretary
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian
Ecumenical Director and Diocesan Legate Diocese
Armenian Church of America, Eastern
United States

Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon
Executive Director
Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP)

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church (TEC)

The Rev. Emmett L. Dunn
Executive Secretary-Treasurer/CEO
Lott Carey Foreign Baptist Mission Convention

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Susan Gunn
Director
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Rev. Teresa Hord Owens
General Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada

Charlene Howard
Executive Director
Pax Christi USA

Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain
General Secretary
American Baptist Churches USA

Bridget Moix
General Secretary
Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)

Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie
President and General Secretary
National Council of Churches USA (NCC)

The Rev. Jihyun Oh
Stated Clerk
General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Dr. David R. Peoples
President
Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc.

Dr. Tyrone S. Pitts
General Secretary Emeritus
Progressive National Baptists Convention Inc

Richard L. Santos
President & CEO
Church World Service (CWS)

Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson
General Minister and President
United Church of Christ (UCC)

Stephen Veazey
President
Community of Christ

Bishop Hope Morgan Ward
Ecumenical Officer
Council of Bishops, United Methodist Church

Reverend Dr. Elijah R. Zehyoue
Co-Director
Alliance of Baptists