



Evangelical Lutheran
Church in Canada



**Mennonite
Central
Committee**

The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada

Ecumenical statement on the escalation of violence between Hamas and Israel:

A Cry to End the Violence and to uphold the rights of all civilians to life and freedom from violence and discrimination.

KAIROS Canada and its member churches and agencies—including Anglican Church of Canada, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Mennonite Central Committee of Canada, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, The United Church of Canada—are following reports of the escalation of violence between Hamas and Israel and the mounting civilian death tolls in Israel, Gaza, the occupied West Bank, and East Jerusalem with deepening alarm and profound grief.

We condemn the violence, particularly against Israeli and Palestinian civilians, which constitutes a war crime. The level of human loss and suffering is unconscionable and must stop. We lament the loss of Palestinian voices for peace in international media that fails to distinguish between Hamas and Palestinian civilians.

We work with partner organizations in the region, both Palestinian and Israeli, and we hear their cries for a lasting and just peace. For years KAIROS Canada has worked with partners, who are supporting local women peacebuilders throughout the region to know their rights and to build conditions for sustainable, just and equitable peace on the ground. KAIROS member churches and agencies also work with a variety of partners in Palestine and Israel on programs of peace, development, education, health care, pilgrimage, and humanitarian assistance. These voices are being silenced, and this work is extinguished by the current violence.

We join the voices of those in the region and others in Canada and internationally in urging the Canadian Government to support a ceasefire and a negotiated resolution to this violence. The pain and tragedy of the growing numbers of civilian lives, Israeli and Palestinian, lost in the

violence to date are evidence of the need for an immediate ceasefire, not an escalation of violence.

We echo the voices of the [Heads of Churches in Jerusalem](#) from their joint statement issued on October 8, 2023, lamenting that Palestinians and Israelis are “currently mired in violence and suffering due to the prolonged political conflict and the lamentable absence of justice and respect for human rights.”

We affirm and amplify statements by [Diakonia](#) and others who call for respect for international humanitarian law and human rights by both sides. And we reiterate that attacks against civilians are in violation of international law, regardless of the perpetrator and whether by immediate violent force or by long-term structural oppression. As [Amnesty International notes](#), “Palestinian civilians are not responsible for the crimes of Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups and Israel must not, under international law, make them suffer for acts they play no role in and cannot control.” Similarly, civilians in Israel are not responsible for the actions of the government of Israel and should not be made to suffer.

Canada and the wider international community have failed to uphold international law; the international response must comply with international humanitarian law. We urge Canada to take leadership in calling for a corridor to provide humanitarian relief to Gaza.

We call on our members and all people of goodwill to:

- pray and work for a just and lasting peace for Palestinians and Israelis;
- write to their Member of Parliament to urge Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Minister Melanie Joly to call for:
 - an immediate ceasefire;
 - a safe corridor to provide humanitarian relief to Gaza;
 - an end to the misery of the current blockade;
 - the immediate and safe release of all hostages;
 - the rights to life and freedom of both Palestinians and Israelis;
- support and amplify the voices of faith based and grassroots civil society peace and development organizations in Palestine and Israel who are calling for an end to the violence and a just and lasting peace.

In addition to condemning the spiraling violence and doing everything in its power for an immediate ceasefire, Canada must work with renewed effort toward peace with justice that upholds the rights of both Palestinians and Israelis to life and to freedom from violence and discrimination, and an end to the occupation.

KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives

Anglican Church of Canada

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Mennonite Central Committee of Canada
The Presbyterian Church in Canada
The United Church of Canada