

## Groupe de travail Église dans la Société

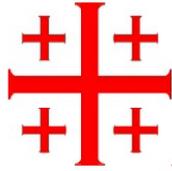
### Dossier réactions événements Israël et Gaza octobre 2023

Le 7 octobre 2023, le Hamas a envahi Israël et des centaines de civils ont été impitoyablement massacrés. Dans le monde entier, le dégoût a été exprimé face à ces crimes commis par le Hamas. L'Église Protestante Unie de Belgique s'est également [exprimée](#).

Parce qu'il est important de prendre note des voix de nos sœurs et frères dans la région touchée elle-même, ce dossier a été préparé. Il comprend des réponses d'églises, d'organismes ecclésiastiques, de groupes œcuméniques et d'un pasteur luthérien bien connu. Ils réagissent à l'évolution de la situation de leur point de vue.

Les textes ci-dessous sont en anglais. On peut trouver aussi des textes en français sur le site web d'[Action Chrétienne en Orient](#)

1. Patriarches et Chefs d'Églises à Jérusalem
2. Patriarcat Latin à Jérusalem
3. Pierbattista Card. Pizzaballa
4. Église Evangélique Luthérienne de Jordanie et de Terre Sainte
5. Centre Œcuménique de Théologie de la Libération Palestinienne Sabeel
6. Kairos Palestine
7. Révérend Dr. Mitri Raheb



## **PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF THE CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM**

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### **THE PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM UNITE IN A CALL FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE AMIDST UNFOLDING VIOLENCE**

JERUSALEM, October 7, 2023

The Holy Land, a place sacred to countless millions around the world, is currently mired in violence and suffering due to the prolonged political conflict and the lamentable absence of justice and respect for human rights. We, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, have time and again appealed for the importance of respecting the historic and legal Status Quo of the holy shrines. In these trying times, we come together to raise our voices in unity, echoing the divine message of peace and love for all humanity.

As custodians of the Christian faith, deeply rooted in the Holy Land, we stand in solidarity with the people of this region, who are enduring the devastating consequences of continued strife. Our faith, which is founded on the teachings of Jesus Christ, compels us to advocate for the cessation of all violent and military activities that bring harm to both Palestinian and Israeli civilians.

We unequivocally condemn any acts that target civilians, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, or faith. Such actions go against the fundamental principles of humanity and the teachings of Christ, who implored us to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31).

It is our fervent hope and prayer that all parties involved will heed this call for an immediate cessation of violence. We implore political leaders and authorities to engage in sincere dialogue, seeking lasting solutions that promote justice, peace, and reconciliation for the people of this land, who have endured the burdens of conflict for far too long.

In our capacity as spiritual leaders, we extend our hands to all those who suffer, and we pray that the Almighty may grant comfort to the afflicted, strength to the weary, and wisdom to those in positions of authority. We call upon the international community to redouble its efforts to mediate a just and lasting peace in the Holy Land, based on equal rights for all and on international legitimacy.

Let us remember the words of the Apostle Paul: “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace” (1 Corinthians 14:33). In the spirit of this divine message, we implore all to work tirelessly towards an end to violence and the establishment of a just and lasting peace that will allow the Holy Land to be a beacon of hope, faith, and love for all.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all during these challenging times.

—The Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem



7/10/2023

## Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

### Statement

The cycle of violence that has killed numerous Palestinians and Israelis in the past months has exploded this morning, Saturday, October 7, 2023.

We witnessed to a sudden explosion of violence that is very concerning due to its extension and intensity. The operation launched from Gaza and the reaction of the Israeli Army are bringing us back to the worst periods of our recent history. The too many casualties and tragedies, which both Palestinians and Israeli families have to deal with, will create more hatred and division, and will destroy more and more any perspective of stability.

We call on the international community, the religious leaders in the region and in the world, to make every effort in helping to de-escalate the situation, restore calm and work to guarantee the fundamental rights of people in the region.

Unilateral declarations surrounding the status of religious sites and places of worship rattle religious sentiment and fuel even more hatred and extremism. It is therefore important to preserve the Status Quo in all the Holy Places in the Holy Land and in Jerusalem in particular.

The continuing bloodshed and declarations of war remind us once again of the urgent need to find a lasting and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian - Israeli conflict in this land, which is called to be a land of justice, peace and reconciliation among peoples.

We ask God to inspire world leaders in their intervention for the implementation of peace and concord so that Jerusalem may be a house of prayer for all peoples.

# Letter to the entire diocese

By: Pierbattista Card. Pizzaballa - Published: October 24 Tue, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
May the Lord give you peace!

We are going through one of the most difficult and painful periods in our recent times and history. For over two weeks now, we have been inundated with images of horrors, which have reawakened ancient traumas, opened new wounds, and made pain, frustration and anger explode within all of us. Much seems to speak of death and endless hatred. So many 'whys' overlap in our minds, adding to our sense of bewilderment.

The whole world views this Holy Land of ours as a place that is a constant cause of wars and divisions. That is precisely why it was good that a few days ago, the whole world joined us with a day of prayer and fasting for peace. It was a beautiful view of the Holy Land and an important moment of unity with our Church. And that view is still there. Next October 27th, the Pope has called for a second day of prayer and fasting, so that our intercession may continue. It will be a day that we will celebrate with conviction. It is perhaps the main thing we Christians can do at this time: pray, do penance, intercede. For this, we thank the Holy Father from the bottom of our hearts.

In all this uproar where the deafening noise of the bombs is mixed with the many voices of sorrow and the many conflicting feelings, I feel the need to share with you a word that has its origin in the Gospel of Jesus. That is the starting point which we set out from, and return to, time and time again: a word from the Gospel to help us live this tragic moment by uniting our feelings with those of Jesus.

Looking to Jesus, of course, does not mean feeling exempt from the duty to speak, to denounce, to call out, as well as to console and encourage. As we heard in last Sunday's Gospel, it is necessary to render *"to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."* (Matt. 22:21). Looking to God, we therefore want, first of all, to render to Caesar what is his.

My conscience and moral duty require me to state clearly that what happened on October 7th in southern Israel is in no way permissible and we cannot but condemn it. There is no reason for such an atrocity. Yes, we have a duty to state this and to denounce it. The use of violence is not compatible with the Gospel, and it does not lead to peace. The life of every human person has equal dignity before God, who created us all in His image.

The same conscience, however, with a great burden on my heart, leads me to state with equal clarity today that this new cycle of violence has brought to Gaza over five thousand deaths, including many women and children, tens of thousands of wounded, neighborhoods razed to the ground, lack of medicine, lack of water and of basic necessities for over two million people. These are tragedies that cannot be understood and which we have a duty to denounce and condemn unreservedly. The continuous heavy bombardment that has been pounding Gaza for days will only cause more death and destruction and will only increase hatred and resentment. It will not solve any problem, but rather create new ones. It is time to stop this war, this senseless violence.

It is only by ending decades of occupation and its tragic consequences, as well as giving a clear and secure national perspective to the Palestinian people that a serious peace process can begin. Unless this problem is solved at its root, there will never be the stability we all hope for. The tragedy of these days must lead us all, religious, political, civil society, international community, to a more serious commitment in this regard than what has been done so far. This is the only way to avoid other tragedies like the one we are experiencing now. We owe it to the many victims of these days and to those of years past. We do not have the right to leave this task to others.

Yet, I cannot live this extremely painful time without looking upward, without looking to Christ, without the faith that enlightens my view and yours on what we are experiencing, without turning our thoughts to God. We need a Word to accompany us, to comfort and encourage us. We need it like the air we breathe.

*“I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have tribulations, but take courage, I have conquered the world.” (Jn. 16:33).*

We find ourselves on the eve of Jesus’ Passion. He addresses these words to His disciples, who will shortly be tossed about, as if in a storm, before His death. They will panic, scatter and flee, like sheep without a shepherd.

Yet, this last word of Jesus is an encouragement. He does not say that He shall win, but that He has already won. Even in the turmoil to come, the disciples will be able to have peace. This is not a matter of theoretical irenic peace, nor of resignation to the fact that the world is evil, and we can do nothing to change it. Instead it is about having the assurance that precisely within all this evil, Jesus has already won. Despite the evil ravaging the world, Jesus has achieved a victory, and established a new reality, a new order, which after the resurrection will be assumed by the disciples who were reborn in the Spirit.

It was on the cross that Jesus won: not with weapons, not with political power, not by great means, nor by imposing himself. The peace He speaks of has nothing to do with victory over others. He won the world by loving it. It is true that a new reality and a new order begin on the cross. The order and the reality of the one who gives his life out of love. With the Resurrection and the gift of the Spirit, that reality and that order belong to His disciples. To us. God’s answer to the question of why the righteous suffer, is not an explanation, but a Presence. It is Christ on the cross.

It is on this that we stake our faith today. Jesus in that verse rightly speaks of courage. Such peace, such love, require great courage.

To have the courage of love and peace here, today, means not allowing hatred, revenge, anger and pain to occupy all the space of our hearts, of our speech, of our thinking. It means making a personal commitment to justice, being able to affirm and denounce the painful truth of injustice and evil that surrounds us, without letting it pollute our relationships. It means being committed, being convinced that it is still worthwhile to do all we can for peace, justice, equality and reconciliation. Our speech must not be about death and closed doors. On the contrary, our words must be creative, lifegiving, they must give perspective and open horizons.

It takes courage to be able to demand justice without spreading hatred. It takes courage to ask for mercy, to reject oppression, to promote equality without demanding uniformity, while remaining free. It takes courage today, even in our diocese and our communities, to maintain unity, to feel united to one another, even in the diversity of our opinions, sensitivities and visions.

I want, and we want, to be part of this new order inaugurated by Christ. We want to ask God for that courage. We want to be victorious over the world, taking upon ourselves that same Cross, which is also ours, made of pain and love, of truth and fear, of injustice and gift, of cries and forgiveness.

I pray for us all, and in particular for the small community of Gaza, which is suffering most of all. In particular, our thoughts go out to the 18 brothers and sisters who perished recently, and to their families whom we know personally. Their pain is great, and yet with every passing day, I realize that they are at peace. They are scared, shaken, upset, but with peace in their hearts. We are all with them, in prayer and concrete solidarity, thanking them for their beautiful witness.

Finally, let us pray for all innocent victims. The suffering of the innocent before God has a precious and redemptive value because it is united with the redemptive suffering of Christ. May their suffering bring peace ever closer!

We are approaching the solemnity of the Queen of Palestine, the patroness of our diocese. The shrine was erected during another time of war, and was chosen as a special place to pray for peace. In these days we will once again reconsecrate our Church and our land to the Queen of Palestine! I ask all churches around the world to join the Holy Father and to join us in prayer, and in the search for justice and peace.

We will not be able to gather all together this year, because the situation does not allow it. But I am sure that the whole diocese will be united on that day in prayer and in solidarity for peace, not worldly peace, but the peace which Christ gives us.

With sincere prayers for all,

+Pierbattista Card. Pizzaballa

Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem

*The Evangelical Lutheran Church  
in Jordan and the Holy Land*



الكنيسة الإنجيلية اللوثرية  
في الأردن والأراضي المقدسة

### **Statement on the Escalating Situation in The Holy Land**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land is shocked and distressed by the escalating violence in the Gaza Strip and its surrounding areas; and we are particularly concerned by the potential for today's events to trigger even greater violence throughout all of Palestine and Israel. We lift in prayer the families of innocent civilians whose lives were lost today as they mourn their loved ones. We also pray for healing for all the injured and traumatized.

As the language of "war" is now being used to characterize this violence, it is important to remember that the warfare of today is not isolated. It is connected to a larger context and a longer history. As a church, we continue to advocate for non-violence; but we also believe it is crucial to understand the circumstances from which violence emerges. In this case, it is a symptom of a people deeply wounded by extended and systematic violence and oppression. The Holy Land has also seen unprecedented attacks on religious sites in recent years, which makes our situation even more personal and emotional.

The ELCJHL will take part in joint efforts to promote the rights of the Palestinian people and assist in providing critical and timely assistance to those affected by this war. Psychological assistance, especially, will be prioritized as an important response to those living through these conditions. We appeal to the international community to stand with us in these efforts to address the crisis in Gaza and to urge all involved to uphold the principles of international humanitarian law.

As always, we pray for a peaceful resolution that extends human rights to all. We remember that the peace Jesus offers, that which is based in justice and solidarity with the suffering and oppressed, is at the root of true peace.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid" (John 14:27) NRSV.

**Bishop Dr. Sani-Ibrahim Azar**

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## A STATEMENT FROM THE SABEEL ECUMENICAL PALESTINIAN LIBERATION THEOLOGY CENTRE

East Jerusalem, Palestine - October 2023

**Terrible violence continues between Israeli forces and armed Palestinian resistance groups, resulting in thousands of dead and injured on each side, including scores of civilian men, women, and children. This devastating escalation comes in the wake of a surprise attack on Israel by Hamas, with Israeli leadership threatening long-term violence and destruction.**

At Sabeel, we envision a future where every life holds intrinsic value, and every individual enjoys freedom and safety, irrespective of their background or identity. Sabeel condemns and mourns the tragic loss of all life and human suffering. We categorically reject all forms of violence. And, we recognize that the only way forward for us is non-violence.

It has been 75 years since the Nakba, 57 years of brutal military occupation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and 16 years since the suffocating military blockade of Gaza began. In light of this seemingly endless march of dispossession and death, armed Palestinian resistance groups initiated an unprecedented assault, including the tragic massacre of Israeli civilians. Responding, the Israeli government has engaged in airstrikes, indiscriminate bombing campaigns, and responsive actions that amount to war crimes—accompanied by genocidal rhetoric—against the civilian population in Gaza. Recent events have witnessed the tragic deaths and injuries of numerous Israelis and Palestinians, along with the abduction of civilians.

As we experience and attentively keep track of events as they unfold, it is pivotal to remember:

- Palestinians have been under attack, suffering dispossession and dehumanization from Zionism, for over 75 years.
- The continuation of Israel's policies related to displacement, apartheid, and occupation has been facilitated by the backing of several dominant global powers, notably the U.S., which remains deeply involved in this conflict.
- In the past year, an extreme shift to the far-right in the Israeli government has seen an intensified and ruthless military occupation. The Palestinian people face violent expulsions, house demolitions, mass killings, sieges, and daily indignities.
- There are recurring, oftentimes violent, incidents where Jewish extremists and Israeli forces disrupt the right to freedom of worship, storming the Muslim Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, attempting to lay claim to the site, and intimidating peaceful devotees.
- The Israeli authorities have imposed exceptional restrictions on Palestinian Christians and churches, particularly during their religious festivities. Attacks by radical Jewish groups on Palestinian Christian communities and properties persist, with little to no action in response from the Israeli authorities.
- Over the years, the people of Gaza have felt the chokehold of a strict Israeli blockade by air, sea, and land, effectively trapping over two million individuals and depriving them of fundamental human rights. In recent days, Israel has prohibited all food, fuel, electricity, or water from entering Gaza.
- Palestinian prisoners, including children, are routinely assaulted, bound, blindfolded, and dragged from their residences in the early hours by Israeli occupation forces, often detained without formal charges or trial in military prisons for months or years. Peaceful protests against these policies, even in the form of hunger strikes, are met with harsh repercussions.
- Many Palestinian residences across various villages and towns are either set ablaze by Israeli settlers or demolished by military operations.

- Whole Palestinian communities have been forced to vacate their ancestral homes and lands, at times to facilitate Israeli military drills.

**For 75 years, Israeli policies have revolved around displacement, military occupation, and the maintenance of an apartheid regime. The suffering over these years is significantly tied to the role of the international community in this turmoil, most especially the United States alongside global powers like the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and others. By consistently supporting Israel, the U.S. and other powers indirectly further the ongoing violence. The unchecked military aid, diplomatic shielding, and enormous financial support from the U.S. play a part in bolstering Israel's existing policies. Unwavering backing for the Israeli military only perpetuates the cycle of violence.**

In light of these challenges, we, the undersigned, pledge our commitment to nonviolence, influenced by the following convictions:

- The might of the Israeli Army and its affiliates is unparalleled; violence will not bring victory.
- Nonviolence is a potent force. It enables collective participation from Palestinians, Israelis, and the international community. The path of nonviolence is the most impactful.
- Our ultimate struggle is not against individuals; it is against evil. Violence harms individuals, but our true adversary is the inherent evil of occupation and racist ideologies, which can be vanquished with good, for God is the embodiment of goodness.
- We champion nonviolence because it resonates with the divine principles set by the Creator. As rain is impartial, showering both the oppressed and oppressors, we uphold God's ways.

To all those who believe in and exercise violence, we want to say:

1. Reject violence; it's not the solution. Don't be governed by wrath or vengeance.
2. To those still gripping their weapons, we beg you to adhere to the principles of the Geneva Conventions and the laws of armed conflict. Upholding the sanctity of civilian lives is a shared tenet across religions and human morality. Let all combatants refrain from the wanton destruction of human life and adhere, at the very minimum, to the principles of distinction, proportionality, military necessity, fair treatment of prisoners, and no *means malum en se* (inherently evil methods).
3. We do acknowledge those who have chosen to observe international humanitarian law even in the midst of so much devastation.

We extend an invitation to our friends, partners, and everyone devoted to justice, peace, and reconciliation to support our nonviolent mission. The longstanding policies of displacement, military occupation, and apartheid by the Israeli government must be dismantled, but not at the cost of our values and humanity. The elimination of the other is not a viable option. Stand with us in our nonviolent endeavors.

**The international community must understand that lasting peace and the cessation of violence are intertwined with the pursuit of genuine justice based on international law. Palestinians call for a fair resolution to the injustice of the Nakba, an end to the Israeli military occupation, and an end to the apartheid system. The tenacity and spirit of the Palestinian people stand unwavering, with *sumud* ("steadfast perseverance") consistently evident. The nonviolent majority of Palestinians, along with our Israeli and international friends, should continue to harness creativity and courage as their primary tools, and it is imperative for all who seek liberation, justice, and peace in Palestine and Israel to uplift and support each other.**



## **Kairos Palestine Statement on the War on Gaza**

Date: October 11, 2023

**If I go forth into the field,  
behold, the slain with the sword!  
And if I enter into the city,  
behold, those who are sick with famine!  
Yes, both the prophet and the priest go  
about into a land that they know not.**

Jeremiah 14:18

The war on Gaza again, but this time it started from Gaza. It has caused great suffering and destruction in Israel. Many see it as an unjust war against Israel. But the question that every human being, and every seeker of peace and justice, must ask is: Why did this war start?

We all say, No, to the War. We all say, Yes, to peace, and to working for a just and final solution to an existing conflict and to the injustice that has been imposed on the Palestinian people for more than 70 years. Israel does not see the Palestinian people as having any right to exist, and the international community is too weak to implement its decisions to find a just and final solution.

We all mourn and console all the victims on both sides of the conflict. A human being is a human being, both Israeli and Palestinian, and every human being is dear in the eyes of God, and in the eyes of his family, relatives, and loved ones.

No to war, yes to a just and final peace.

What is the reason for this sudden war that started from Gaza?

The immediate cause of the war was the formation of the extreme right-wing Israeli government that allowed and encouraged the attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque, and challenged the religious feelings of Muslims and Christians, despite the successive ultimatums and warnings that came from Gaza, Palestinian leaders, and other global religious and political leaders. This same government has also allowed the spread of settlers throughout occupied Palestine, from north to south, wreaking havoc on the land, attacking Palestinians, killing them and confiscating their lands, under the watch and protection of the Israeli occupation army.

As for the root causes driving the war, they are the permanent state of terror that we Palestinians live in daily from the rule and tyranny of the Israeli occupation army, and the absolute insistence by

successive Israeli governments, especially this government, that there is no Palestinian state, and that the Palestinian people have no right to self-determination. And all the consequences that arise from that.

This is in addition to the stifling siege of Gaza (two million people in an area not exceeding 360 km<sup>2</sup>). Since 2007 until today, the people of Gaza have been living in a large open prison that lacks all humane conditions for living.

This war is a reaction and answer to all of that. This war is a demand for Israeli and international recognition of the existence of the Palestinian people and their rights like all other peoples. It is a demand for justice and freedom. It is a demand for independence in a recognized state with Arab Jerusalem as its capital.

This war is a word to the rulers of Israel that weapons do not protect or provide safety. Weapons only cause death. They do not bring life to anyone. We do not want death, but life. We want freedom, justice and independence. We say to you now what we said in our 200ti Kairos Document, Moment of Truth: "Our future and [Israel's] future are one. Either the cycle of violence that destroys both of us or peace that will benefit both." We also reiterate what the President of Colombia has said in response to the current war: "The only way for Israeli children to sleep in peace is for Palestinian children to sleep in peace."

We all cry for everyone who died, was injured, or was captured. We have been crying for more than seventy years. Refugees in all parts of the world are asking to return. In your prisons, Israel, there are thousands of political prisoners asking for their freedom. There are Palestinians who has been forcibly displaced, homes you have destroyed, homes you raided day and night, and in which you instilled terror.

This war came to say, it is time for everyone to wake up and know the truth about what is happening in Palestine and Israel, that Israel has settled in a land that belongs to the people of Palestine, and has deprived the people of Palestine of their freedom. This situation needs to be corrected. Correcting it is not difficult. International law and international standards are acceptable to the Palestinians. Let's agree on it.

This war came to say that weapons do not protect, and the strong who underestimate the weak will not protect themselves nor will they find security. Safe hearts are safe strongholds. Palestinian hearts, if their full freedom, dignity, and state are returned to them, are your only protection.

If your hearts are pure, your services will no longer say, "Death to the Arabs," and the slogan of some of your representatives in the Knesset will no longer be, "No, to peace with the Arabs, and death to the Arabs."

It is time for the rulers and friends of Israel to understand that the peace of the country, and the peace of Israel, is the peace of the Palestinian people. Enough of supporting the blatant injustice being done to us.

Do not think that your comprehensive and destructive war on Gaza is the solution. Do not think that your ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians in Gaza is the solution! We are people like you. We want life like you. We want all our rights like you.

We are on this earth only by the grace of God, not by the grace of any human being. And we will remain in it. Come to an understanding. Come to the path of your correct and permanent security, and our correct and permanent security. We all live in sacred land, ours and yours. Let us walk in God's ways, together abandon all violence, resort to the good word, begin a new future, and build a new land.

Oh God, teach us your ways so we can walk in them.

Together we can build peace that will be peace for the region and the world.

**Turn away from evil and do good;  
seek peace and pursue it.  
The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous  
and his ears toward their cry.**

Psalm 34:14-15

Kairos Palestine, the most extensive Palestinian Christian ecumenical non-violent movement, is based on the Kairos Palestine document, "[A Moment of Truth](#)", launched in 2009, affirming that the Palestinian Christians are part and parcel of the Palestinian nation, calling for peace to end all suffering in the Holy Land by laboring for justice, hope and love, embraced by the Christian community, signed by all historically recognized Palestinian Christian organizations, and endorsed by the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem.

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## **The Fruit of Justice will be Peace (Isaiah 32,17)**

Dear Friends,

Last Thursday we concluded our international conference “Land, People, and Culture”, only to wake up two days later to see that the situation has changed drastically. We are glad that most of our guests are back in their countries safe and sound. We have connected with the few who remained, and they informed us that they are doing well.

Many friends, concerned about our safety, have been sending us messages inquiring about our situation. Your prayers, advocacy, and support are much appreciated. We are fine; however, Bethlehem and all the Palestinian cities in the West Bank were sealed off by the Israeli military, all streets leading out or into Bethlehem were blocked with cement blocks. This is preventing most students from reaching the University, which forced us to move to online teaching. But you can imagine how difficult it is for people here to concentrate while watching the horrendous news on TV.

As I write this late Monday afternoon, I hear the Israel F15 flying over our cities on the way to bomb Gaza. This last hour alone, over 130 Israeli air strikes were conducted in Gaza; several of these strikes are in the area where our satellite center is located. Gaza is in flames. Our heart goes to the civilians in Gaza who live in fear, without electricity, water, food, or medicine. Our thoughts are with Rana, the director of our training center in Gaza, our staff, and students there.

We are concerned about the high number of civilian casualties, irrespective of they are Palestinians or Israelis. We call for the Geneva Convention and International Humanitarian Law to be guaranteed by the international community. However, the military and political blind support that Israel is getting from Western countries is giving Israel a green light to level Gaza without any repercussions.

The mainline Western media is in full gear utilizing a settler colonial rhetoric, demonizing the Palestinians as savages and terrorists, without talking about the root causes. Even when we speak out sharing our own narrative, colonial voices try to silence us demanding that we repeat settler colonial propaganda.

So, let's talk about the root causes: These young Palestinian fighters were born under siege in the largest open-air prison in the world. For decades, they waited for justice, for freedom, for a life in dignity, but all in vain. What they saw was a double standard treatment; Those who stood with the occupied Ukrainians were standing with the Israeli occupiers. They witnessed four wars that Israel led against their narrow strip that has been used as a real testing ground for their latest technological weapons and artillery. Worse, they were left with no hope whatsoever in an area 360 square kilometers where the air, the water, and the sea are polluted and where life became unlivable. Israel and the world left them to perish slowly but surely as if they were children of a lesser god, negating their right to defend themselves.

Allow me to reiterate: Occupation will keep triggering resistance. No one can relinquish people's quest for freedom. Without justice there will be no peace. Keep us in your prayers, raise your voice for justice. It is high time to decolonize Palestine so that our people can live in dignity and reach the potential that God has for them.

Thank you for your support.

Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb