



Association of Pittsburgh Priests

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Statement Calling for Cease Fire and Humanitarian Aid in Gaza February 19, 2024

The Israeli War on the people of Gaza has now entered its fifth month with deaths in Gaza of nearly 30,000 people, with over 10,000 of them women and children. But these figures do not convey the devastation and suffering inflicted on the people of Gaza. The relentless bombing of hospitals, schools and homes has reduced Gaza to what some have called a moonscape. The indescribable suffering of the people of Gaza is such that many people have described it as a genocide. The International Court of Justice has ruled almost unanimously that there is a “plausible case” that Israel is committing genocide. Most of the people in northern Gaza have had to flee from their homes southwards towards Rafah and are now facing a planned ground invasion. It seems that the Israeli policy is to push the entire Gazan population out of Gaza.

The Association of Pittsburgh Priests (APP) recognizes the right of Israel and the people of Gaza to defend themselves, but it condemns both the unexpected October 7 attack by Hamas militants from Gaza, the killing of over 1,000 civilians, and the taking of over 200 hostages, **and** the growing, grossly disproportional planned Israeli response.

As the head of the UN observed, the October 7 attack did not come out of nowhere; there is a context, i.e. decades of oppression and occupation of the people of Gaza. The perpetrators of this crime should be brought to justice and held accountable, but to make war on the entire Gazan population for this crime is nothing less than ethnic cleansing. The suffering of the people of Gaza has been exacerbated by the defunding of UNRWA (a United Nations lifeline to the 1.7 million refugees in Gaza and over 30 million people worldwide)) by the US and many European countries on the basis of an unproved allegation that 12 of its over 13,000 employees in Gaza have been implicated in the October 7 attack on Israel. This is denying Gazan civilians the delivery of the most basic life-sustaining aid.

The APP believes that war is not the solution to the situation in Gaza and its relationship with Israel. We add our voice to Pax Christi International and all those who are demanding a ceasefire and an end to the war through negotiations in good faith, and the sending of the urgently needed humanitarian aid as quickly as possible. We also urge the immediate restoration of funding to UNRWA.

Also, we lament the latest funding bill passed by the US Senate which earmarks over \$14 billion to the Israeli government. This allocation would only be piling fuel on the war in Gaza and deepening the suffering of the people of Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel. Continuing the war is also resulting in heightened acts of Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia and possible expansion of the war into other parts of the Middle East.

It is imperative that the U.S. and the international community exert all its power and leverage to stop the carnage in Gaza and take decisive diplomatic action for a lasting peace built on justice for all involved. Anything less will be viewed by history as complicity.

Mission Statement: The Association of Pittsburgh Priests is an organization of ordained and non-ordained women and men who act on our baptismal call to be priests and prophets. Our mission, rooted in the Gospel and the Spirit of Vatican II, is to carry out a ministry of justice and renewal in ourselves, the Church and the world.