



December 18, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As Christian leaders whose churches have long and deep partnerships with Palestinian Christian churches and agencies, we write to urge you to address the immediate and urgent need to stop [ethnic cleansing](#) and what legal experts have cautioned is [possible genocide](#) in Gaza.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the US and Canada, the United Church of Canada [and the United Church of Christ in the US] represent millions of Christians in the United States and Canada. For decades, we have joined our voices with Palestinian and Israeli partners, seeking an end to the illegal occupation of Palestine and the blockade of Gaza, and towards a just peace for all, upholding the rights of both Palestinians and Israelis to life and freedom.

Members of our denominations join in the international shock and outrage at the brutal attacks on Israeli communities by Hamas militants on October 7, 2023. We have been consistent in our condemnation of all acts of violence against civilians and grieve with Israelis and Palestinians who have lost loved ones.

We also condemn the attacks on civilians, the killing of so many innocent people including children, the abductions and detention of Palestinian children and of political prisoners, the taking of hostages, and putting civilians in harm's way. We are outraged by and condemn Israel's ongoing military action in Gaza, and the collective punishment of 2.2 million Gazans. We watch with horror and grief as Israel resumes its bombardment of Gazans, ending the temporary pause in violence, and killing more and more innocents every day in one of the world's most densely populated areas, as well as in the West Bank.

To be clear: we condemn the attacks by Hamas as war crimes.

Your administration and the Canadian Government have also rightly and unequivocally condemned Hamas's actions.

However, now that Prime Minister Trudeau has joined allies in urging stronger efforts towards a sustainable ceasefire, and issued a joint statement with the prime ministers of Australia and New

Zealand on Dec. 12, and following the second US veto in the UN Security Council of a resolution calling for a ceasefire on Dec. 8, we continue to question the US Government's support for Israeli impunity in the face of its repeated violations of international law over the past 75 years.

We condemn the Israeli bombings of Gaza as war crimes.

We call on you to unequivocally hold Israel to account for its legal obligations under international law as an occupying military power. We further call on you to fully and unequivocally support an immediate and independent investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by both Israel and Hamas since October 7, 2023.

The cumulative impact of the current violence is that [more than 18,800 fatalities are reported](#), in addition to the approximately 1,200 people killed by Hamas and Israeli soldiers in Israel on October 7. Israel's brutal bombardment of Gaza has resulted in the deaths of [more than 7,700 Palestinian children and 5,100 Palestinian women](#) as of December 3. Thousands are trapped under the rubble. The shocking death toll rises every hour. More than 1.7 million Palestinians have been displaced from their homes and communities in Gaza with no safe place to go.

There is an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Gaza because of the restriction of water, food, medical supplies, fuel, electricity, destruction of most of the medical facilities, the forced displacement of more than one million people, closure of all hospitals, and the complete collapse of the medical system. Churches, mosques, hospitals, and schools have been targeted, even as innocent people seek shelter and care. And all the while, Israel has continued its assault on Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, making 2023 the deadliest year for Palestinians since the UN has kept records.

This must end. Now.

[Legal experts at the United Nations](#) have repeatedly warned that the world is witnessing a genocide, and is doing very little to stop it. To the contrary, the United States and other allies of the Israeli government have openly and repeatedly stated their unwavering support for Israel's actions, making them complicit. We urge you to adhere to your obligations as set forth in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and to work toward the prevention of further loss of life in Gaza.

As is evident from the current tragedy, the US approach has not worked, nor is it conducive to a just peace. We urgently call upon your administration to:

- recognize the genocide underway and take immediate steps to end it, preventing further loss of life;
- uphold international human rights and humanitarian law consistently and without exception;
- insist upon an immediate and permanent ceasefire;
- advocate for the release of hostages, political prisoners and those held in administrative detention;

- demand the opening of humanitarian corridors;
- and engage meaningfully in the pursuit of a durable, just, and lasting peace in the region that addresses the core issues and root causes.

The failure to clearly do so is unconscionable.

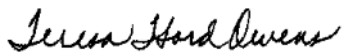
Our denominations have long raised our voices for just and lasting peace in the region. Since the intensification of conflict, we have issued statements, written letters, raised funds for humanitarian aid, and engaged in civil society and ecumenical actions—in deep concern for all lives in the land called “Holy.”

We despair that, despite the massive outcry and protests of people across the United States, your government has failed to listen and to call for a ceasefire. We, the undersigned, add our voices to those cries.

We pray that you show moral courage and conviction and call for an immediate ceasefire and work diligently for a just and lasting peace for both Palestinians and Israelis.

May it be so.

Most sincerely,



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



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



Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne
Moderator
The United Church of Canada