

**To Church Leaders in Jerusalem
and the Middle East Council of Churches**

Esteemed Church Leaders in Jerusalem,

Warm greetings from the Christian Council of Norway and the church leaders in Norway.

During our last board meeting, on September 18th the Christian Council of Norway adopted a new statement regarding the situation in Israel and Palestine. On behalf of our Council, we wish to express our deepest sympathies to you, your Churches, and people in the midst of the ongoing crisis in Gaza and Palestine. We assure you of our prayers and ongoing support.

We have heard your pain - please know that you are not alone.

Statement from the Christian Council of Norway on the Situation in Israel and Palestine

The Christian Council of Norway has heard the call from the church leaders in Jerusalem and asks all member churches to help realize it:

"We urge Christians, and all people of goodwill around the world, to lift up the vision of life and peace in our war-torn region. We remember Jesus' words, 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God' (Matt. 5:9). In this extreme crisis, let us all recommit ourselves to work and pray together in the hope, given by the grace of the Almighty, that we may begin to realize the sacred vision of peace among all God's children." **(Statement from the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, 26.08.24)**

The Christian Council of Norway is deeply shaken and distressed by the conditions in Israel and Palestine.

We cannot remain silent while Israeli hostages are still being held captive and tens of thousands are being killed and maimed in the brutal war in Gaza. The situation is extremely grave. The risk of the war escalating to neighboring countries threatens the security of the entire Middle East.

We express our deepest sympathy with both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. The Christian Council of Norway condemns all forms of terror and call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners held without due process.

We call for humanitarian access for the suffering population of Gaza and the West Bank.

In this extreme crisis situation where the International Law's rules for war are exceeded and fundamental human rights are violated, terror, war and violence only lead to more destruction. These must end and be replaced by political negotiations between the parties. As churches, we have no opinion on the preferred political solution. However, any solution must respect the dignity and equal rights of all inhabitants. God has created all humans with the same infinite value. This must be reflected in a peace settlement that ensures peace, security, and equal rights for all ethnic groups. We reject discrimination based on religion or ethnicity.

As Christians, we are deeply concerned for our brothers and sisters in Christ in Israel and Palestine. We are united in God's universal Church, and we have a particular responsibility for one another. In Gaza, churches and Christian institutions have been destroyed, and the 2,000-year-old Christian presence is now in danger of being wiped out. We fear that the fewer than 1,000 Christians remaining in Gaza may also disappear. Christians make up about 1-2% of the population in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Israel. Their situation is very difficult, affecting both Palestinian Christians and Messianic Jews.

Almost daily, we receive messages from our Palestinian sister churches describing the extremely challenging situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. They urgently ask for our support.

The Christian Council of Norway calls on member churches to pray, alongside the Christians and all people of good will in Israel and Palestine, for peace and justice for all. Send greetings and financial support to the churches so that they can continue to be present in the region where the Church was founded and bears witness to Jesus Christ in word and deed. We encourage generous donations to Norwegian Church Aid, Caritas, and other organizations connected to our member churches which are present and provide humanitarian efforts in Gaza.

On behalf of Christian Council of Norway

Oslo September 18th 2024



Per Anders Sandgren
Chair of the Board



Erhard Hermansen
General Secretary