



CHURCH OF NORWAY

Presiding bishop

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RESPECT INTERNATIONAL LAW AND BRING JUST PEACE FOR THE SUFFERING PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY

"But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." (Amos 5:24)

We have met during the 2024 Festival of Saint Olav in Trondheim July 29-31, where the focus has been on the significance of the rule of law. Saint Olav and the Church together introduced 1000 years ago a new rule of law for the whole country, based on Christian principles and the respect and care for every human being. We have reflected together the significance of the rule of law for every nation and for the international community in desperate need of justice and peace.

One of us is representing the extreme and urgent situation of the Palestinian people and Palestinian Christians today. One of us is representing the Church of Norway, committed to promote the values of international law and justice as a genuine application of Christian values today.

We have recalled that Saint Olav championed the rule of law for everybody counter to the rule of power just because of being powerful. In his footsteps we uphold international law and human rights for all, with a special focus today on the Palestinian people, who continue to suffer an ongoing catastrophe (Nakba in Arabic).

We call for respect for all human beings, and an immediate cessation of the war on Gaza, and for unrestricted humanitarian aid access. The toll on Palestinian civilians is staggering: approximately 40,000 killed, including over 15,000 children, around 90,000 injured, 2 million forcibly displaced, and 70% of Gaza's infrastructure and housing units destroyed. We recognize and mourn also the loss of lives on the Israeli side, near 1200.

We urge the fighting parties in Gaza, and all nations, to respect the rule of law and work tirelessly on implementing the rulings of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC) rulings and opinions. This is urgent for the peace of all parties in the ongoing war in Gaza, but also for the whole region and the entire international community.

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We urge the international community to enforce the provisional measures taken by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding the duties of Israel as a state:

- to immediately suspend military operations in and against Gaza
- to take all reasonable measures to prevent genocide
- to prevent the expulsion and forced displacement of Palestinians and ensure access to adequate food, water, humanitarian assistance, fuel, shelter, clothing, hygiene, sanitation, medical supplies, and other necessities.

We also emphasize the ICJ's ruling on July 19, 2024, declaring Israel's occupation of Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem unlawful, along with the settlement regime, annexation, and exploitation of natural resources. The ICJ mandates Israel to end its occupation, dismantle settlements, provide reparations to Palestinian victims, and facilitate the return of displaced people. It calls on all countries and international organizations to act to end this unlawful situation. This affirms the position promoted by the Church of Norway together with other members of the World Council of Churches.

We stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people in general and the Christian community in Gaza, in particular the ones seeking refuge in Gaza churches amid shelling, including recent attacks on the St Porphyros Orthodox Church in Gaza (July 30). We support Palestinian Christians in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Israel, who face constant persecution and insecurity.

For decades we have listened to the plight and cry of Palestinian Christians. This is documented for example in the 2009 Kairos Palestine document, the 2017 Open Letter to the global ecumenical movement, and the 2020 Cry for Hope, and recent statements during the last months. They describe their experiences today as one of insecurity, violations of human rights, occupation, annexation, ethnic cleansing, apartheid, and genocide.

We call on all member churches of the World Council of Churches to do what they can to promote the rule of law and work for an end to this catastrophe through their statements, actions, investments and priorities, according to how it is defined now through the statements of the highest international court, the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

God of Justice and Peace, inspire us to work for the rule of law for everybody and to build a new future in the Holy Land and in the whole world!

Trondheim, Norway, August 1, 2024

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