*This statement may be helpful to include as a resource for the 2024 World Day of Prayer service, given the focus on Palestine. Adapted from* [*United Women in Faith*](https://uwfaith.org/press/2023/united-women-in-faith-condemns-impact-of-war-on-women-and-children-urges-for-ceasefire-womens-voices-included-in-peace-negotiations/)

We join our voices from across the world in decrying the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. War takes a disproportionate toll on women, children, and youth. We urge all parties to agree to a permanent ceasefire, abide by international norms, and include women, women’s organizations, and gender perspectives in peace negotiations. We also encourage all parties to prioritize the safety and well-being of women, children, and youth.

Gaza is in the midst of a humanitarian crisis of epic proportions. Leaders must demand a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution that promotes just and lasting peace.

We condemn the violent attacks of Hamas on October 7 that caused the loss of 1,200 Israelis and other nationals and the kidnapping of more than 200 people. We also condemn the Israeli government’s cutting off of water, gas, electricity, goods, and supplies to Gaza. We denounce the Israeli government’s large-scale air bombardment and ground invasion of hospitals, homes, schools, mosques, and houses of worship.

These actions place women and girls at greater risk for gender-based violence, unwanted pregnancies, and infections and disrupt access to essential resources like food, water, medicine, social services, and medical care. We must not lose sight of the physical, psychological, and spiritual impact war and instability have on women, children, and youth.

Women and children bear the brunt of the Israeli government’s actions. As of January 22nd, the death count is at 25,102, including civilians and Hamas fighters, with women and children being 70% of the overall count. Health officials said 62,681 people have been injured in the conflict.

There are 50,000 pregnant women in Gaza, with over [180 giving birth each day](https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/1/17/trauma-replaces-joy-for-mother-giving-birth-during-israels-war-on-gaza). Many are unable to receive [care or access medical resources](https://www.who.int/news/item/03-11-2023-women-and-newborns-bearing-the-brunt-of-the-conflict-in-gaza-un-agencies-warn) for emergency C-sections or clean water for mixing infant formula. According to the [World Health Organization](https://turkiye.un.org/en/257186-gaza-crisis-deepens-un-aid-convoys-face-delays-and-obstacles), as of 3 January, only 13 out of Gaza’s 36 hospitals are even partially functional – nine in the south and four in the north – while operating at three times their capacity.

More than 2.2 million Palestinians live in Gaza, 1.93 million of whom have been forced to flee; many families have moved multiple times. Palestinians are experiencing extraordinary levels of internal displacement while extremist voices in Israeli politics call for expansion of illegal settlements into Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, with some calling to push the Palestinian population out of Gaza . Already, several Palestinian villages on the West Bank have been harassed and threatened, forcing their residents to flee. Such unethical proposals and actions are a clear violation of international law, prompting justified fears. We cannot look away from this grave crisis.

We also condemn anti-Palestinian, antisemitic and anti-Muslim rhetoric and hate crimes targeting Palestinian, Jewish and Muslim individuals, families and communities.

As women of faith committed to peace with justice, we are inspired by the work of Palestinian, Arab Israeli, and Jewish Israeli women who advocate for solutions that minimize bloodshed and provide a path forward. We unite our voices with Palestinian and Israeli women who have long recognized that achieving long-term peace in the region will require a negotiated political solution. The status quo of continued occupation, denial of self-determination, and intermittent war will not lead to just and lasting peace, freedom and security for both peoples. We also join with Israeli voices who call for the repudiation of extremist language and for the Israeli government to demonstrate that it will not pursue a genocidal program against Palestinians.

Unfortunately, women’s voices are rarely amplified during war. And yet, as women of faith, we know that women are not just victims but also powerful actors, generating creative and fruitful political solutions. All negotiations must include women’s voices and concerns, including complying with the global framework laid out in Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. We continue the spirit of the widow confronting the unjust judge urging justice in Luke 18.

We urge our political leaders to call for:

* An immediate permanent ceasefire.
* Application of international humanitarian laws and release of all civilian hostages.
* An end to the 16-year blockade on Gaza that has subjected 2.2 million Palestinians to collective punishment.
* Unhindered humanitarian access and delivery to all parts of Gaza.
* An end to providing weapons of war to Israel and an overall arms embargo on the whole region.
* The inclusion of women, women’s organizations, and gender perspectives in peace negotiation and future resolution, complying with the global framework laid out in Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

We encourage our church communities to:

* Join in prayer and action that lead to peace with justice;
* Actively speak out against anti-Palestinian, anti-Muslim, and anti-Semitic hate speech and actions;
* Deliberately seek Palestinian, Arab Israeli, and Jewish Israeli women’s perspectives working for justice and peace;
* Learn more about the sufferings of Palestinians and Israelis and nonviolent ways of ending the Israeli/Palestinian conflict from the perspective of all faith communities.

**A prayer for peace in Israel and Gaza**Christ, Prince of Peace, hear our prayer and lament, for our suffering sisters and brothers.
Our hearts are heavy as we witness lives torn apart, as we see the faces of frightened children and hear the pleas of those without water or food.

We pray for the dead and the grieving, for the injured and the afraid.
We pray for courage and perseverance, for those working for healing and to bring aid.
We pray for world leaders, that they may strive for a just and lasting peace.

God of new beginnings, in your ways are compassion and hope.
Open our hearts to dialogue and understanding.
Lead us all to answer your call to become peacemakers
today, and all the days of our life. Amen. (Source: [CAFOD](https://cafod.org.uk/pray/prayer-resources/prayer-for-israel-and-gaza))