



# Victorian Council of Churches

President: Deacon Joseph Leach

## Statement on Gaza

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Matthew 5:9*

*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. John 16:33*

*And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Colossians 3:15*

Christians and churches are entrusted with a ministry of peace and reconciliation. The role of the churches is to seek meaningful peace in the many tragic situations around the globe. Such peace requires reconciliation and reparation for current and past injustices.

The worldwide ecumenical movement has always sought to be in active solidarity with the Christians of the Middle East, who are living in continuation of an unbroken line of faithful Christian witness in the multi-religious contexts of their countries. They make vital contributions to the vibrant diversity and development of their societies.

It is with heavy hearts we continue to witness the ongoing conflict in Gaza. His Holiness Pope Francis, the World Council of Churches and the Middle East Council of Churches have all called for an end to the killing and for efforts to build a pathway to a just and lasting peace.

There is no pathway to a just peace through ongoing killing. We urge a permanent end to all killing. We condemn acts of brutality and atrocities committed by those on both sides of the conflict. Such actions continue to form barriers to any efforts at lasting peace and continue to sow the seeds of hatred and fear that bear the fruit of lasting armed conflict.

We call on the Australian Government and the people in our churches to support Israelis and Palestinians who are working for a meaningful, just and lasting peace. The details of such a peace need to be negotiated by the representatives of the Israeli and Palestinian people.

We welcome the efforts the Australian Government has made to see an end to the current escalation in the war between the Israeli Government and Hamas and their opposition to illegal settlements in Palestinian territories. There can be no lasting peace if the question of land cannot be resolved and reparations made for historical injustices.

We welcome the humanitarian assistance the Australian Government has provided to the people in Gaza and urge that the Australian Government continue to provide such funding to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza.

We call for the immediate release of the hostages held in Gaza.

We encourage our **member churches** to offer support and comfort to those who are living with grief and fear in their communities as a result of the current escalation in the conflict and acts of racial and religious hatred happening in Australia. We condemn all acts of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

We encourage our **member churches** to welcome people from Gaza and Israel that have been able to find refuge in Australia, noting many have material needs as they are on visas that do not allow them to work in Australia.