



Interfaith Communities United For Justice And Peace

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Religious Communities must stop blessing war and violence!

STATEMENT ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND ISRAEL/PALESTINE Adopted September 2014

As people of faith and conscience, we are appalled and saddened by the escalating violence in the Middle East. We are convinced that military force is not the answer. President Obama's call for military intervention in the civil wars taking place in Iraq and Syria cannot be justified militarily or morally. We are deeply concerned that the President feels he has the authority, under the Authorization for the Use of Military Force, to engage in military interventions without consulting Congress. The AUMF must be repealed.

As we have seen repeatedly, violence begets more violence and our drones and bombing raids recruit more militants. A different approach is needed if we want different results. We need to work for political solutions through diplomacy and humanitarian aid and express genuine concern for the best interests of all of the people of this region.

We therefore call upon the United States:

- To end arms shipments to the Middle East. US weaponry fuels violence and supports authoritarian regimes that do not represent the will of their people or promote democracy or a just peace.
- To provide massive humanitarian efforts (implemented mainly by civilians, not by the military) to rebuild Gaza, Iraq, Afghanistan and other areas ravaged by US military interventions. We feel that the hundreds of billions of dollars spent on the failed "War on Terror" would have produced far better results if our resources had been used for community development and to alleviate poverty and disease.
- To condemn human rights abuses by all countries in the Middle East, including our allies, and to support genuine democracy, especially nonviolent grassroots movements seeking to end oppression.

Israel/Palestine

We are especially concerned about the violence in Israel/Palestine because the US provides billions of dollars annually in aid to Israel, and because this area is considered sacred to Muslims, Christians, and Jews.

We are appalled by the thousands killed in the latest violence in Gaza, most of them civilians and children, as well as by massive destruction of homes, mosques, schools and hospitals. We equally grieve the deaths suffered in Israel from Hamas rockets.

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We therefore call upon the United States:

- To support the international commission of inquiry appointed by the United Nations to investigate possible human rights violations and war crimes committed by both sides during the recent conflict.
- To condemn violence on both sides and to stop justifying Israel's use of disproportionate force and killing of innocent civilians because of "its right to defend itself," which leads only to an escalation of violence.
- To demand that Israel immediately end its blockade and siege of Gaza.
- To demand Hamas end its violence and dismantle its offensive arsenal.
- To condemn extremism and demonization on both sides. Both sides have legitimate grievances, yet both sides have committed wrongs. The US needs to work with the UN and the international community to help redress grievances and resolve differences in a fair and impartial manner.
- To encourage genuine peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians. If the Israeli government will not participate in talks with Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, then no further American aid of any sort should be provided to Israel.
- To provide immediate humanitarian aid and supplies to Gaza. Our tax dollars have played a significant role in the destruction of Gaza; now our tax dollars must be used to rebuild Gaza and aid its civilian population.
- To support the international consensus recognizing Palestine as a state, alongside Israel.
- To end illegal settlements in occupied territories that make a two-state solution increasingly difficult if not impossible to implement.
- To put pressure on both governments to guarantee equal human and civil rights for Palestinians and Israelis, as guaranteed by the UN Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Resolving the conflict in Israel/Palestine, with equality and justice for all, is an important step towards peace in the Middle East.