



World Day of Prayer International Committee (WDPIC) urgently calls for an immediate ceasefire in Israel and Palestine, protection of civilians, and release of hostages.

We are deeply shaken by the violence and bloodshed of the past week, whose victims are mainly civilians. Attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure violate international law, and are an affront to human decency.

We mourn with all who have lost loved ones, and our hearts are with all who continue to be threatened by continued violence and hatred. We condemn the vicious attacks on civilians in Israel. We cry out against the taking of civilian hostages. We condemn the relentless and indiscriminate bombing of Gaza, and the blocking of food, water and humanitarian aid. We raise our voice against the use of collective punishment against a civilian population.

The current escalation of violence is also horrifying. We hear statements filled with the language of hatred and vengeance. We also hear voices calling for peace and justice. We amplify the calls for an immediate cessation of violence, and despite the devastating realities, we still believe that another way is possible.

As a women's prayer movement, we join with our siblings of all faiths, especially Jews and Muslims. We speak against the use of gender-based violence, all too common in times of war. We call for the protection of all children, noting that half of the 2.2 million inhabitants of Gaza are under the age of 15.

We long for the dawn of a new day for the peoples of Israel and Palestine. We believe that God is always at work, and always moving us towards love, justice and peace. We pray with all of our siblings in Israel and Palestine for a just and lasting peace. We hope that our worldwide community, divided as it is, will recognize that we are all connected, and that we must all take responsibility for the circumstances in the Holy Land. We must never give up on a commitment to peace, justice, and dignity for all the people living in the land.

On March 1, 2024 the worldwide ecumenical community of women who celebrate the annual World Day of Prayer will engage a worship service written by our sisters from WDP Palestine, under the theme “I Beg You... Bear With One Another in Love.” As often happens in World Day of Prayer, a theme and writer committee that is chosen years ahead of time becomes timely and profoundly challenging in the year that it is celebrated.

The World Day of Prayer is not just one day, and especially in this time of extreme violence, we call for prayer now, and in the days to come.

*God of Peace and Justice,*

*We cry out to you with broken hearts and deep anguish for what is unfolding in Israel and Palestine. It is difficult to find the words to express the weight of this moment. We rest on your Spirit, who intercedes with sighs too deep for words. We ask that you heal every wound, and you give us wisdom for how to stop this cycle of violence. We pray especially for women who are particularly vulnerable in times of war. Move our world quickly towards peace and justice.*

*Amen.*