

A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR AN IMMEDIATE & PERMANENT CEASEFIRE IN GAZA

A Resolution of Witness June 2024

Submitted by the Mount Hollywood United Church of Christ,
Congregational Church of Fullerton, and Brea Congregational United Church of Christ

SUMMARY

We understand that the underlying causes of the siege of Gaza are both complex and simple, deep and ongoing. This resolution seeks to issue public witness to the atrocities occurring in Gaza that are contrary to Christian values and international law. Following our own convictions, listening to the voices of Palestinians and interfaith allies, and discerning the movement of the Spirit, we call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire.

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL GROUNDING

This resolution is grounded in the repeated Biblical call from the prophets to do justice:

From Isaiah, “Get your injustice out of my sight! Cease to do evil and learn to do good! Search for justice and help the oppressed! Protect those who are orphaned and plead the case of those who are widowed!” (1:16b-17)

From Jeremiah, “YHWH God says: Act with justice and integrity: rescue the victim from the oppressor; do not oppress or mistreat resident aliens or the orphaned or widowed, and don’t shed innocent blood in this place.” (22:3)

From Amos, “Instead, let justice flow like a river, and righteousness flow like an unfailing stream.” (5:24)

And from Micah, “Listen here, mortal: God has already made abundantly clear what ‘good’ is, and what YHWH needs from you: simply do justice, love kindness, and humbly walk with your God.” (6:8)

We hear again in the teachings of Jesus a call to seek justice and be peacemakers, following in Jesus’ example:

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice: they will have their fill.” (Matthew 5:6)

“Blessed are those who work for peace: they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of their struggle for justice: the kingdom of heaven is theirs.” (Matthew 5:9-10)

“The Spirit of our God is upon me: Because the Most High has anointed me to bring Good News to those who are poor. God has sent me to proclaim liberty to those held captive, recovery of sight to those who are blind, and release to those in prison – to proclaim the year of our God’s favor.” (Luke 4:18-19, quoting Isaiah 61:1-2)

In living into this scriptural call to do justice and seek peace, the 15th General Synod in 1985 affirmed that the United Church of Christ is a Just Peace Church.¹ That affirmation calls upon each local church to become:

“a community of solidarity with the poor, seeking to be present in places of oppression, poverty, and violence, and standing with the oppressed.”

“a community of resistance, standing against social structures comfortable with violence and injustice.”

“a community of political and social engagement, in regular dialogue with the political order, participating in peace and justice advocacy networks, witnessing to a Just Peace in the community and in the nation, joining the social and political struggle to implement a Just Peace.”

This resolution furthers the Just Peace work and calling of the United Church of Christ. Just Peace is more than an end to violence. It calls for peace that is just, including that “people everywhere will be able to meet their basic needs, including the right of every person to: food and clean water, adequate health care, decent housing, meaningful employment, basic education, participation in community decision-making and the political process, freedom of worship and religious expression, protection from torture, and protection of rights without regard to race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or national or social origin.”

This resolution continues the long history of resolutions and actions of the United Church of Christ concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Ten resolutions have been endorsed by the UCC in the past 50 years, including:

Affirming the right of Israelis and Palestinians to live peacefully within internationally recognized borders (1973).

Rejecting the theological claims of Christian Zionism (2003).

Reallocating US foreign aid to constrain the militarization of the Middle East; supporting organizations committed to the non-violent resolution of the conflict (2005).

¹ <https://new.uccfiles.com/pdf/just-peace-church-pronouncement-GS-15.pdf>

Resolving to use the economic leverage of the United Church of Christ to divest from companies that profit from the occupation of Palestinian territories (2015).

Identifying Israel's occupation of Palestinian land and the human rights abuses it has committed there to be a major source of conflict and calling for an end to settlement activity (2019).

Declaring a need for Just Peace between Palestine and Israel (2021).

TEXT OF THE MOTION

WHEREAS, antisemitism is an ancient, ongoing, and global threat to the thriving and well-being of our Jewish neighbors.

WHEREAS, anti-Muslim and anti-Arab hate is an enduring threat to the thriving and well-being and safety of our Muslim and Palestinian neighbors.

WHEREAS, we recognize the attacks by Hamas of October 7 to be a profound and seemingly insurmountable violation.

WHEREAS, Christian Zionism, rooted in antisemitism, has distorted historic and religious legacies, and diminished the rights and claims of local residents.

WHEREAS, we bear witness to the ongoing killing of thousands of innocent civilians, and the inflicting on Gazans conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction in whole or in part, which, according to the International Court of Justice of the United Nations, "appear to be capable of falling within the provisions of the [Genocide] Convention."
(see Notes).

WHEREAS, we share in the culpability of our nation, which pays for weapons and machinery that kill civilians, destroy homes, devastate medical infrastructure, and prevent aid from reaching those in desperate need of food and care.

WHEREAS, our faith as Christians and our beliefs as the United Church of Christ call us to express deep concern and urgently respond to the catastrophic humanitarian crisis in Gaza. We cannot and must not be silent.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

1. Joining with our UCC church leaders and partners, we call for an immediate, permanent ceasefire.²
2. We call for the immediate release and the safe return of all hostages — Israelis, as well as Palestinians and others.
3. We condemn restrictions at Gaza border crossings to the flow of life-essential supplies.
4. We call for the resumption of funding and unlimited access for all humanitarian relief organizations, and for restoring the free flow of food, water, medical supplies, fuel, and other necessities of life to counter current levels of starvation and suffering.
5. We call for all actions in Gaza to be guided by the Geneva Convention and the International Court of Justice.
6. We call on our political leaders to cease funding for arms that cause death and injury and block aid.
7. We call for every decision to be grounded in a commitment to respect the rights and human dignity of all people, a just peace that Christ calls us to build.

FUNDING

The funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

² https://www.globalministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/FINAL_Joint-letter-to-Pres-Biden-Dec18_2023-UCC-UCCanada-DoC.pdf, <https://cmep.org/march-2024-international-letter/>

NOTES:

UCC Declaration for Just Peace Between Israel and Palestine

<https://www.globalministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/General-Synod-2021-Resolution-I-P.pdf>

House Resolution Calling for Ceasefire

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-resolution/786/text>

UN Security Council Resolution for Ceasefire

<https://www.jns.org/full-text-un-security-council-resolution-2728/#:~:text=The%20U.N.%20Sec>

UCC Leaders and Partners Call for Ceasefire

https://www.globalministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/FINAL_Joint-letter-to-Pres-Biden- Dec18_2023-UCC-UCCanada-DoC.pdf

Affirming UCC as a Just Peace Church

<https://new.uccfiles.com/pdf/just-peace-church-pronouncement-GS-15.pdf>

Mount Hollywood UCC Resolution for Ceasefire

<https://www.mounthollywood.org/just-peace-church.html>

United Nations: Background and Clarification of “**Genocide**”

Application of the label "genocide" to Israel's actions in Gaza is contested within the international community. The **United Nations International Court of Justice** concluded that the events in Gaza may “plausibly” constitute genocide (January 26, 2024); The **Republic of South Africa**, due to escalating violence and worsening conditions in Gaza, requested that provisional measures be applied to the conditions of genocide which it asserts are now occurring (March 6, 2024); The **State of Israel** rejected those charges of genocide in its response (March 24, 2024). Links to all three positions are included in the [International Court of Justice Press Release](#) (March 28, 2024). The issue has not yet been resolved.

According to the [United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect](#), genocide is defined as:

“...any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such:

1. *Killing members of the group;*
2. *Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;*
3. *Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;*
4. *Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;*
5. *Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”*