

# **A Jerusalem Voice for Justice**

*an ecumenical witness for equality and a just peace  
in Palestine/Israel*

Jerusalem, Pentecost, June 8, 2025

## **An SOS for Gaza Cast your nets again!**

To every human being, every person with a conscience, to all lovers of peace,

As Christians in the Holy Land, we are sounding the alarm about the recent unprecedented escalation in the Israeli war on Gaza. After more than a year and a half of death and destruction, the moment we now find ourselves in is terrifying. We are, in essence, sending an SOS: we need your help.

The siege on Gaza was renewed on March 2, 2025, resulting in the longest blockade on the entry of food and other essential aid in the history of the Gaza Strip. A renewed Israeli military offensive was launched on March 18, 2025. On that first day alone, hundreds of people were killed. Since then, tens of people are being killed on an almost daily basis. Now, as we write these lines, the Israeli army is occupying more and more territory in the Strip, leading to more destruction and death.

In the past weeks, the situation has progressively deteriorated: in addition to the close to 55 000 dead and over 120 000 wounded, starvation and famine are being experienced (the UN recently identified 10 000 new cases of malnutrition). Hospitals and other civilian facilities are almost completely shut down. More than two million Gazans and the remaining 24 live Israeli hostages are all at risk of their lives at every moment.

Moreover, the escalation is not only due to the ongoing siege and onslaught. The Israeli authorities unveiled a new strategy, pretending that it aims at the distribution of much needed aid. However, this is conditional on yet further displacement of the population. Israeli control will be guaranteed by a US supported agency, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF). Distribution depends on what are being called “Secure Distribution Sites”, fully controlled by the Israeli army. On May 16, 2025, the executive director of the GHF, Jake Woods, declared that he refused to “be part of anything that forcibly dislocates or displaces the Palestinian population”. On May 25, 2025, he resigned after calling for Israel to allow in aid through all possible channels. The GHF began distribution on May 26, 2025 however the screening processes, the difficulties to reach the distribution points and the continued killings of Gazans making their way to these points raise the likelihood that the GHF is a cover for Israeli military operations. Meanwhile, the Gazans continue to starve.

Many are asking what this escalation means. Firstly, it is presenting Gazans with a horrific choice: submit to full Israeli control or starve. Furthermore, many are wondering whether this might lead to another attempt to ethnically cleanse the Strip, culminating in pushing the population beyond the borders of the Strip. The end-goal of removing the Palestinians has been repeatedly openly formulated by Israeli politicians, including members of the government, since President Trump first suggested it on February 5, 2025.

The United Nations and many of the international NGOs have recognized that this “distribution of aid” is an escalation of the war. They know full well that to participate in such “distribution” would mean being complicit in using food assistance as part of a war strategy, explicitly prohibited by the Geneva Conventions.

The Israeli political and military authorities constantly dispute reports that describe how dire the situation in Gaza is. They dispute the numbers of those killed, dying, wounded and starving. However, these same authorities refuse to allow foreign journalists into Gaza to report on what is going on. Meanwhile, about 180 local Gaza journalists and media workers have been killed during Israeli military operations since October 7, 2023.

While the people of Gaza are the first victims of this cruel war, the rest of us are under another, more invisible psychological and spiritual bombardment—flooded with images and competing narratives, we are left feeling hopeless, paralyzed by despair and unable to help. Exhausted! Therefore, we call out to you. The international community must intervene. Although our voices do not seem to be heard by world leaders, we encourage all who have ears to hear and eyes to see, to take action.

In John’s Gospel (21:1-13), the disciples gathered on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Despondent and exhausted, Peter suggested that they simply go back to their lives as fishermen. And yet, although they toiled through the night, they caught nothing. But then, Jesus appeared on the shore and called to them, “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some” (Jn. 21:6).

We call out to you: please, try again, cast your nets again. We beg you not to give up. Let us be filled with the energy of the resurrection and of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and recommit to fighting for life and freedom for our brothers and sisters in Gaza and everywhere else in Palestine/Israel.

Jerusalem Voice for Justice members include:

His Beatitude Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Michel Sabbah (emeritus)

His Excellency Greek Orthodox Bishop Attallah Hanna

His Grace Lutheran Bishop of the Holy Land Munib Younan (emeritus)

Mr. Yusef Daher

Ms. Sawsan Bitar

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