



The Rev. Jihyun Oh calls for urgent accountability in the devastating crisis in Gaza

In a letter, the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Executive Director of the Interim Unified Agency calls for 10 actions 'grounded in the Gospel'

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to stand in the deepest places of suffering, to speak when silence enables harm, and to act wherever human worth is disregarded. Christ walked among the sick, the hungry and the sorrowful. He reminds us still: *“Whatever you did for one of the least of these ... you did for me”* (Matthew 25:40).

Gaza has become one of the most devastating [humanitarian crises](#) in recent history. Reports now estimate that more than 60,000 Palestinians have been killed since October 2023, many of them women and children. In recent weeks alone, nearly 2,000 Palestinians have been murdered. We have witnessed the destruction of entire communities and the forced displacement of nearly the entire population. The most vulnerable are being killed in homes, hospitals, schools and places of worship. Nearly every person in Gaza has lost their home. Entire families have been erased, and thousands remain buried beneath the rubble. The health care system has completely collapsed. Medical workers have been killed while tending the wounded. Journalists and aid workers have been targeted. In the West Bank, settler violence and deadly military raids continue to escalate with impunity.

The humanitarian catastrophe has reached unfathomable proportions. Gazans are facing mass starvation in what experts now describe as a human-made famine. [Starvation](#) is used as a weapon of war, as children have died by the thousands. Since Israel broke the ceasefire agreement on March 2, nearly all food and humanitarian supplies have been cut off, leaving 2 million people without access to the most basic necessities. On July 20, Israeli [military forces](#) opened fire on a crowd gathered outside a World Food Program center, killing dozens who were trying to reach food distribution sites. The trickle of aid that has begun to move in recent days is not enough to address the deep needs.

More than 110 humanitarian and human rights organizations have [issued a joint statement](#) urgently warning the world about mass starvation spreading across Gaza. They report that supplies are now completely depleted and that humanitarian workers are watching their own colleagues and partners grow weak from hunger. Despite this, life-saving resources, including food, clean water, medical supplies, shelter materials and fuel remain stuck at access points, blocked from reaching those in desperate need.

This suffering cannot be explained away as the collateral damage of war. It is the result of choices that violate international law and fundamental moral norms. The world’s tolerance, even facilitation, of this violence has become a collective moral failure. Silence in the face of this is not neutrality; it is complicity.

We must name what we are witnessing. The deliberate targeting of civilians and the systematic erasure of Palestinian life demand urgent accountability. Increasing numbers of international legal scholars, Christian denominations, human rights organizations, and genocide experts,

including [Christian](#), [Jewish](#), and Israeli voices, have warned that the unfolding destruction in Gaza meets the criteria of genocide under [international law](#).

The [Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\)](#) has long-standing ties to the Holy Land and decades of policy affirming the rights of both Palestinians and [Israelis](#) to live in peace, security and dignity. Our criticism of Israeli government policy is never a condemnation of a people or a faith. We reject hate in the form of antisemitism, Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism. We grieve every loss of life by murder as a violation of God's image in humanity. We hold in prayer both Palestinian and Israeli families who have experienced terror, trauma, and profound grief. We condemn the horrifying attacks of Oct. 7, 2023, and mourn with all whose lives have been shattered by the ongoing war.

Our General Assembly has consistently argued for peace in the [Holy Land](#). We have:

- Recognized that Israeli laws and practices toward Palestinians meet the international legal definition of [apartheid](#).
- Called for an end to military occupation and systemic discrimination.
- Opposed the blockade of Gaza and the use of collective punishment.
- Urged the U.S. government to ensure that its aid does not contribute to violations of human rights.
- Condemned all acts of violence and targeting of civilians.
- Supported [divestment](#) from companies profiting from the occupation and [boycotts](#) of settlement products.

As human dignity is systematically denied, we lift our voices in lament, outrage and urgent moral witness. At the same time, we acknowledge that we are called not only to weep but also to act. Our actions are expressions of a commitment to moral accountability — a core commitment of our Reformed tradition. As Reformed Christians, we believe that faith must be expressed through justice. This is a call to conscience, a moral demand rooted in our commitment to human rights, international law, and the Gospel of Christ Jesus.

Scripture compels us: *"Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute" (Psalm 82:3). And: "Let us love not in word or speech but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18).*

Rooted in this witness and grounded in the Gospel, we call for:

- An immediate and permanent ceasefire and the protection of all civilians.

- A renewed international commitment to a just peace that ensures equality, safety and dignity for both Palestinians and Israelis.
- Adherence to international law and all relevant United Nations resolutions.
- Independent investigations into violations of international humanitarian law.
- Full and unrestricted humanitarian access to meet urgent needs.
- The release of all hostages and detainees held without due process.
- An end to the occupation and recognition of the right of Palestinians to freedom, justice, return and self-determination.
- Solidarity with Palestinian Christians and all communities working toward peace.
- Suspension of U.S. military aid that contributes to civilian harm and sustains cycles of violence.
- Support for nonviolent tools such as boycott and divestment as legitimate expressions of conscience.

Let us pray for peace that is rooted in justice and justice that leads to lasting peace. Let us pray for God's wholeness in a just peace where Palestinians and Israelis, people of all faiths, can flourish. And let us not look away.

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