

Religions for Peace is Gravely Alarmed at the Escalation of Conflict in the Middle East and Urges Immediate Ceasefire

A Statement from the Executive Committee
05 October 2024, New York

The Executive Committee of *Religions for Peace*, an organization dedicated to peaceful coexistence around the world, is gravely alarmed at the continued war in the Holy Land and its escalation to Lebanon and other parts of the Middle East.

We mourn this preventable tragedy and the loss and displacement of thousands of innocent civilians across Israel, Lebanon, Palestine and the region. We pray and empathize with all those who have been so grievously impacted – losing lives, limbs and livelihood and with homes destroyed and dreams shattered. We worry about children, women, elderly and disabled population who are spending their days in a dire strait, barely surviving from extremely inadequate humanitarian aid.

Everyday, the people in this region, across the borders on all sides, are living in terror and constant bombardment in some of the most densely populated areas. This really must stop.

It is disturbingly regretful to see that there is no ceasefire in effect as the war in Gaza is ongoing for a year now despite the pleas of numerous organizations and leaders. In our previous statements in October 2023 and February 2024, we condemned all acts of crimes and violence against unarmed population of both Israel and Palestine and called for a ceasefire. We continue to urge an immediate ceasefire today.

Religions for Peace stands for justice and dignity of people and the planet, and the protection of all – regardless of faith, ethnicity, gender or age. *Religions for Peace* calls on all parties to exercise maximum restraints and protect the dignity and sanctity of life.

We urge the international community to facilitate a ceasefire agreement and seek a path to a sustainable peace. We urge the global leaders to refrain from fueling the conflicts, and end the sufferings and deaths of innocent people, including thousands of children.

This continued violence will not bring stability and peace in Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, and neither in the region nor around the world. Violence begets only violence. Peace brings stability.

This escalation only serves to deepen divisions and prolong suffering on both sides, as the civilians, especially women and children, are bearing the immeasurable brunt of this.

To de-escalate and seek peaceful solutions in Israel, Palestine, Lebanon and wider region we call for:

1. **Immediate Ceasefire and End to All Aggressions:** All combatants and armed forces must halt all military operations, rocket attacks, airstrikes, ballistic missiles and all other forms of violence.
2. **Humanitarian Access and Safe Shelters:** Ensure humanitarian corridors are open for the immediate delivery of food, drinking water, medical supplies, and all other critical aid to the people of Gaza and Lebanon to alleviate their suffering and prevent further deaths in displaced communities. Ensure that humanitarian workers have unrestricted access to assist the displaced populations and those who are affected by the conflict have the safe passage to seek shelters which must not be targeted.
3. **Release the Hostages:** We call upon Hamas to release all Israeli hostages who are still in captive for a year now and ensure their dignified return to their homes and families.
4. **International Peace Mediation:** International community must rapidly assist negotiations between Israel and Palestine government representatives, and alongside, we call for an emergency regional conference in the Middle East to de-escalate and open a dialogue to find solutions. These mediations should focus on addressing the underlying root causes of the conflict, including political, human rights, humanitarian, territorial issues.
5. **End to Blockade:** In coordination with international bodies, it is imperative to lift dehumanizing blockade on Gaza, which has been under siege for decades, for long-term peace, justice, and equality for both Israelis and Palestinians. The people of Palestine, Lebanon, Israel all deserve to live peacefully, in harmony and with dignity. With the assistance from the United Nations, explore options to deploy peacekeeping operations to maintain stability and address security concerns in Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, and the region.
6. **Two-State Solution:** Re-open the dialogue for a long-term peace agreement to establish a two-state solution, based on mutual recognition, defined borders following the United Nations mandates. The agreed peaceful two-state solution is the only path that guarantees security and dignity for both Israelis and Palestinians.
7. **Address the Needs of Refugees and IDPs:** Address the refugee crises and displaced populations from I

srael, Gaza Lebanon and in the wider region and assist the survivors to rebuild their lives to live with dignity and form a reconciliation body to establish a peaceful, just, equal, sovereign nations, living in harmony, side by side.

Finally, we reiterate the words of the Document of Human Fraternity, “We, who believe in God and in the final meeting with Him and His judgement, on the basis of our religious and moral responsibility, (and through this Document), call upon ourselves, upon the leaders of the world as well as the architects of international policy and world economy, to work strenuously to spread the culture tolerance and of living together in peace; to intervene at the earliest opportunity to stop the shedding of innocent blood and bring an end to wars, conflicts, environmental decay and the moral and cultural decline that the world is presently experiencing.”

Religions for Peace, founded in 1970, is the world’s largest and most representative multi-religious movement advancing common action among the world’s religious communities for peace—peace for all people and for our planet. *Religions for Peace* works through its Interreligious Councils in nearly 100 countries in six regions, along with women of faith and youth networks, at the local, national, regional and international levels, and profoundly believes that every individual, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or background, deserves the fundamental human rights of peace and security.