

Support Peace in Palestine and Israel

Video transcript

ELCA Presiding Bishop Eaton

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The violence between Israelis and Palestinians that we have witnessed in the past couple of days is a shocking escalation of the conflict that has already produced devastating consequences. We mourn for those who have lost their lives and those whose lives have been forever altered by injuries. We call on all parties immediately to halt the indiscriminate targeting of civilians and to cease all violence, including rocket attacks of Israel from Gaza and bombings of Gaza by Israel.

At times we may feel at a loss to know how we can contribute to peace. It is crucial at this moment that we connect our longing for peace with our obligation to work for justice as we address the parties to the conflict and engage the U.S. government through advocacy.

We call on the U.S. government to use its diplomatic strength to lead the Israelis and Palestinians toward negotiations and away from the use of violence. We call on the U.S. government to push Israel to refrain from the use of lethal force against demonstrators, immediately halt provocative and unilateral actions in East Jerusalem and elsewhere in the territories, halt all actions that undermine a two-state solution, protect human rights and respect international law.

We need to move beyond the U.S. trying to manage the conflict and work to put pressure on the parties to stop provocations, especially Israel — like the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes, impeding free access of Muslims to Al-Aqsa during Ramadan, home demolitions and settlement building — that are more than provocations and the source of the unrest, but are actually obstacles to the U.S. stated goal of a two-state solution.

Our goal, as people of faith, is well beyond the absence of physical violence. We are called to address the structural and systemic elements of inequity that favor one group over another and to challenge structures that perpetuate gross disparities in access to health care, education and economic opportunity, and that threaten people's lives. In the context of Israel and Palestine, we are seeking a positive peace, peace with justice, where human dignity is upheld and human rights are protected.

We have a responsibility — as a people of faith who see all, Christians, Jews and Muslims, created in the image of God — to love our neighbor and to work for the common good. That common good — what is in the best interest of Israelis and Palestinians — is peace with justice, in which the occupation is ended and the conditions are set for a secure and viable Israel alongside a secure and viable Palestine.

While this is all very complicated, there are things that you can do. To respond to these immediate issues at hand we have an action alert ready for you — you can find the link below. Use our template letter to urge President Biden to tell Israel to halt the illegal removal of East Jerusalem families from their homes and tell Israel to respect the Status Quo and holy sites in Jerusalem.

Our work doesn't stop with a response to the immediate violence and tensions. We are committed to standing with our Palestinian family, and especially our Palestinian Lutheran family — the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, and the Lutheran World Federation Jerusalem program — and with all Jews, Christians and Muslims working for peace, to address the systemic injustice of the occupation and bring about a resolution to the conflict, based on peace with justice.