



# A Call for Peace in the Middle East

A Joint Statement on the Conflict in Israel and Gaza

*A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.*  
(Jeremiah 31:15)

+ February 14, 2024 – Ash Wednesday

The leaders of the women’s religious communities in the Northwest, along with several Bishops in the Northwest are deeply troubled by the escalating war between Israel and Hamas after the horrifying attack by Hamas on October 7, 2023.

We deplore the violence of the Hamas attack against Israel, just as we deplore the disproportionate violence against Palestinians in Gaza with months of indiscriminate bombing by Israeli forces – all while medical and humanitarian assistance are withheld from innocent civilians.

More recently, the widening of the conflict, as additional nations from the Middle East and the West become involved, is of great concern. Besides the terrifying destruction caused by attacks on both sides, there has been a significant increase in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia throughout the world, which exacerbates the sin of racism and ignores the dignity of the human person.

As Catholics, we pray for a peaceful end to the war in Israel and Gaza, which is destroying innocent lives and devastating families, and invite all people of faith to pray and advocate for a peaceful resolution. We call for a humanitarian cease-fire, knowing that the continued fighting will not resolve the root causes of this relentless cycle of violence but, instead, sow seeds of intergenerational hatred and animosity. We also fervently pray for the immediate release of all hostages and for everyone who is suffering due to the inhumanities and violence inflicted by this war.

Peace is needed now. Accountability rather than retribution is needed now. Language that speaks of peace and reconciliation without words of violence and vengeance is needed now.

We urge a return to negotiating a two-state solution and call on the international community to re-engage in active and sustained support for a just and lasting peace. We also urge the United Nations and relevant authorities to investigate all war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law committed on October 7, 2023, and beyond, as well as those committed in retaliation in the ensuing months, so that truth prevails, and accountability is ensured.

Finally, we call on all parties to fulfill the requirements for peace expressed by Pope Francis in his 2020 Peace Day statement:

“Peace and international stability are incompatible with attempts to build upon the fear of mutual destruction or the threat of total annihilation. They can be achieved only on the basis of a global ethic of solidarity and cooperation in the service of a future shaped by interdependence and shared responsibility in the whole human family of today and tomorrow.”

Spreading the Peace of Christ,

Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province  
Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary,  
U.S. Ontario Province Leadership Team  
Sisters of St. Benedict, Lacey, WA  
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia  
Dominican Sisters of Adrian, MI  
Dominican Sisters of Tacoma, WA  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace

Most Rev. Paul D. Etienne, Archbishop of the  
Archdiocese of Seattle  
Most Rev. Eusebio Elizondo, Auxiliary Bishop  
of the Archdiocese of Seattle  
Most Rev. Frank Schuster, Auxiliary Bishop of  
the Archdiocese of Seattle  
Most Rev. Joseph J. Tyson, Bishop of Yakima  
Most Rev. Jeffrey Fleming, Bishop of Great  
Falls - Billings