

Concept note: World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel 2024

16-22 September (includes UN International Day of Peace on 21 September)

During the World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel 2024, observed 16-22 (includes the UN International Day of Peace on 21 September), church organizations, congregations, and people of faith are encouraged to bear a common witness by participating in worship services, educational events, and acts of support in favor of peace and justice for Palestinians and Israelis.

The World Council of Churches invites member churches, faith-based communities, and civil society organizations around the world to join for a week of prayer for just peace for all in Palestine and Israel. Congregations and individuals around the globe who share the hope of justice shall unite during the week to take peaceful actions, together, to create a common international public witness.

With the formation of the newly appointed World Council of Churches (WCC) Jerusalem Liaison Office Advisory Group, the theme for the World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel is developed by the group members. A preparatory team is invited then by the Jerusalem Liaison Office in cooperation with the WCC Middle East Executive desk, and the Communications department. With other invited members, the preparatory team will help produce the resources of the three WWPPi pillars—educate, pray, and act—to be used during the week.

INTRODUCTION

For the World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel 2024 the advisory group has pointed out one focus for this year: Gaza.

The devastating situation of Palestinians in Gaza after so many months of war reminds us of the need for people of good faith to work harder and pray harder for peace—a lasting peace, so that these wars are not a repetitive scene. The injustice against Palestinians in general and the long siege in Gaza in particular have been a pretext for many confrontations throughout 76 years.

After eight months since the beginning of the war on Gaza, the level of human loss and destruction has been unprecedented in the Holy Land. The statistics issued by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs are devastating, including 35,500 Palestinians killed and 80,000 injured with 60% in both categories being elderly, women, and children; 1.7 million people (75% of the population) who are internally displaced with 60% of residential units damaged as well as 80% of all commercial facilities. In addition, 1.1 million people reached catastrophic levels of food insecurity, and they lack any electricity, sewage, water, or communication networks.

On the health side, most hospitals are out of service with severe shortages of medicines and medical supplies; 800,000 reported cases of acute respiratory infections and 442,000 cases of acute watery diarrhea; and there are 270,000 tons of solid wastewater accumulated on the streets.

As for education, 73% of all schools have been destroyed, leaving 625,000 school-age children without any education or schooling, not to mention that all universities were reduced to rubble. There are currently 17,000 children who are unaccompanied as they were separated from their parents and are most likely orphans. As for humanitarian aid, what is trickling in does not meet a

small fraction of the needs and that was complicated further by the closure of the Rafah crossing from Egypt. These pure statistics paint a very bleak picture of the current state of affairs in Gaza, which is only part of the story. The human tragedies we hear about daily—including amputation operations without anesthesia—are simply too much to bear. Humanity is lost in Gaza!

After the huge number of casualties, deaths, injured, and in captivity, one cannot but start considering the people in pain, hungry, and in prison thus remembering the Lord's words in the Bible:

Matthew 25:35-40 New International Version (NIV)

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.

World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel 2024 Theme

World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel 2024 is a reminder for us all to visit, to feed, and to provide the necessities for the people Jesus called “the least of my brothers and sisters.” At the same time, it is time to reflect on what we do towards this conflict and how we contribute positively or negatively “as if we are doing it to Jesus.”

"Whatever you did..., you did for me." Matthew 25:40

This verse will be the committee proposal of the theme for World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel 2024.