World Council of Churches

Reflection and Prayer

World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel 2026

Theme: Children and Their Protection

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As Christians living in the Holy Land, we cannot speak about peace without speaking about children. Their faces reveal both the wounds of our land and the hope that still refuses to die.

For generations, the Palestinian people have endured conflict, displacement, military occupation, restrictions, and the painful reality of being unable to freely determine their own future on the land of their ancestors. Some even attempt to justify this suffering by appealing to God, as though the dispossession of one people were somehow part of His divine plan for another. But the God revealed in Jesus Christ never wills the humiliation or sacrifice of one people for the sake of another. Every man, every woman, and every child bears His image and possesses an equal and inviolable dignity.

Nearly three years after the terrifying events of 7 October 2023, and the devastating military campaign in Gaza with its catastrophic consequences for the civilian population, the suffering has not diminished. If anything, it has become even more profound. Children throughout Palestine, in Gaza, and in the West Bank alike, continue to pay the highest price. They deserve to live, to learn, to dream, and to grow in peace, just like every other child in the world.

I still remember an interview with a child from Gaza who was asked what he hoped to become when he grew up. His answer was heartbreaking: "We, the children of Gaza, do not grow up. We die before we grow up." The same sentiment tragically echoes among many children in the West Bank. Whether spoken by one child or echoed by countless others, these words express a painful reality. Too many Palestinian children, Muslims and Christians alike, wake each morning uncertain whether they will see another day. Childhood, which should be a season of wonder, has become a daily struggle for survival.

Yet there is another truth that I witness every day. Despite everything, our children continue to smile. They still find joy in the simplest things. They still play, laugh, hope, and dream. Their resilience is extraordinary. It is nourished by faith, by strong family bonds, and by a culture that has learned, through generations of hardship, not to surrender to despair.

Although this Week of Prayer is dedicated primarily to the children of Palestine, it also invites us to remember every child trapped in cycles of violence, fear, and hatred, including Israeli children. They too deserve to grow up free from fear, free from hatred, and free from every ideology that dehumanizes the other. May Palestinian and Israeli children one day discover one another not as enemies but as neighbours, brothers and sisters, all created in the image of the one God.

Despite the injustices and bloodshed of the past, there remains only one worthy path forward: to seek truth, to do justice, to acknowledge the wrongs that have been committed, and to choose genuine reconciliation. May they build together a future in which hatred is directed not against peoples but against injustice, racism, oppression, and every ideology that denies the God-given dignity of the human person. As Saint Paul exhorts us: "Hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good." (Romans 12:9)

Above all, I pray that Palestinian children, who today bear the greatest burden of this cruel and monstrous reality, may finally receive what every child deserves: the freedom to imagine tomorrow instead of merely hoping to survive until it.

Prayer

O Most Holy and Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

You created every human person in Your image and likeness, called to love and capable of receiving and giving love.

O Eternal Word, through whom all things were made, You became a child among us. You knew the tenderness of a family, the simplicity of ordinary life, and even the anguish of becoming a refugee when Joseph and Mary fled with You into Egypt to escape the violence of Herod.

How many children today continue to flee from the Herods of our own age, from their false prophets, their distorted visions, and the blindness of those who follow them?

The Herods of our age and their courts still reign. They worship power instead of truth, selfish interests instead of justice, domination instead of fraternity. In their fear of losing what they possess, they allow innocent children to become victims of war, occupation, ethnic cleansing, hatred, displacement, hunger, and fear. History changes its actors, but the massacre of the innocents continues under new names.

Almighty God, break the logic of violence that governs the hearts of the powerful. Convert, through the work of Your Spirit of Truth, the hearts and minds of those who command armies and shape nations. Deliver them from pride, vengeance, greed, and the illusion that peace can be built through domination. Restore to them the wisdom to recognize that every child, whether Palestinian or Israeli, is infinitely and equally precious in Your eyes.

Protect especially the children of Palestine. Protect also the children of Israel, who are exposed not only to dangers from without but also to the even deeper dangers of fear, dehumanization, and hatred from within. Open their hearts and enlighten their consciences. Heal their wounds and their memories. Console those who mourn, strengthen those who are afraid, and preserve within them the gift of hope. May they inherit not our fears and our hatreds, but a future marked by long-desired justice, authentic reconciliation, lasting peace, and shared prosperity.

May the Holy Land, sanctified by the footsteps of Your Co-eternal and Incarnate Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Child of Bethlehem, of Nazareth, and of Jerusalem, cease to be a land where children learn the language of war before they learn the language of peace. May it become once again a land where justice and mercy embrace, where truth triumphs over lies, and where every family may live in dignity, safety, and security.

As we await the glorious fulfillment of Your Kingdom, when You will definitively wipe away every tear from our eyes and establish perfect justice, we cry out with the faith of the Church:

**Come, Lord Jesus. Come quickly, Maranatha! **

Come now into the hearts of those who govern, into the minds of those who decide the fate of nations, and into the conscience of humanity. We await Your glorious return as Judge at the end of time, but even now grant us a foretaste of Your Kingdom. Give our Holy Land an era of peace, a breath of justice, and a glimpse of the reconciliation that will one day be fully complete in Your eternal Kingdom. The trial has endured too long. Come and comfort Your people. Come and renew our hope. You never allow Your children to be tested beyond the strength that Your grace provides. Raise Your mighty arm and command peace!

Put an end to the works of the Evil One. Defeat the ancient Dragon who delights in hatred, violence, lies, and death. Scatter the idols of power, wealth, domination, and indifference. Let the kingdoms of this world become ever more conformed to the values of Your Kingdom, so that even amid our wounded history they may reflect something of the justice, peace, and mercy that will be perfectly revealed when You are all in all, O Most Holy Trinity of Love and Life.

Wipe away, through the women and men of goodwill whom You send into our lives, the tears from the eyes of Your children. Grant that Palestinians and Israelis alike may live as neighbours, progressively reconciled through truth and justice, safeguarded in peace, and united in the dignity that You bestowed upon every human being from the beginning.

Amen.