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## Recent Events in Gaza and Jerusalem (revised)

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1. The central committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC), meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, on 15-21 June 2018, is deeply concerned by recent developments in Gaza and Jerusalem, and the on-going struggle of the Christians of the Holy Land. The central committee wishes to express its grave concern about the recent killings and unacceptable use of violence in Gaza, and the deteriorating human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Gaza.
2. The central committee expresses its dismay and sadness at the violence and bloodshed resulting from the recent military live-fire response to the demonstrations in Gaza. More than a hundred people, including children, have been killed and more than 13,000 injured. The use of live ammunition on unarmed civilians cannot be defended legally or morally as an expression of the right to self-defence of a state. It is our firm belief that all actors – Israeli and Palestinian – must strive for a just peace, act with utmost respect for the sanctity of life, and exercise restraint from all forms of violence, which can only further escalate the on-going tensions.
3. In addition, the recent decision by the government of the United States of America to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and to move the US embassy to Jerusalem, caused great concern in the region and the wider international community and violated UN resolutions recognising East Jerusalem as occupied territory and the longstanding international consensus that the status of Jerusalem remains to be settled and negotiated in any final peace agreement, which must be achieved between Israelis and Palestinians themselves.
4. The member churches of the WCC look to the Holy City of Jerusalem as the location of the foundational event at the origins of our faith. We reiterate our position that Jerusalem is a shared city of three faiths and two peoples. The WCC re-affirms the right of the State of Israel to exist, and to protect its people and territorial integrity under international law. We also re-affirm our support for the two state solution based on the pre-1967 borders, and consequently for the right of the State of Palestine to exist, and to protect its people and their human rights. The WCC and the ecumenical movement have consistently advocated and worked for a just peace between the peoples of the region, based on international law and equal human rights. We believe that the two state solution is the most viable means of ensuring peaceful co-existence in the region.
5. The WCC central committee, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 15-21 June 2018:
  - **Urges** the State of Israel to cease all military – especially live-fire – responses to non-violent unarmed civilian demonstrations;
  - **Affirms** the international community's decision to condemn the disproportionate use of armed force against unarmed civilians as a clear violation of international humanitarian and human rights law;<sup>1</sup>
  - **Calls** for an international inquiry into the events in Gaza, and for those responsible for crimes under international law to be held accountable;

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<sup>1</sup> <http://undocs.org/A/ES-10/L.23>

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- **Appeals** for the longstanding blockade of Gaza to be lifted, in order to ameliorate the desperate conditions under which the people of Gaza have been forced to live for years;
  - **Calls** on the US Administration to reverse its position regarding the status of Jerusalem;
  - **Urges** the State of Israel to stop the construction or expansion of settlements in the occupied territories, and to desist from formal and informal confiscation of land belonging to churches and to Palestinian families and organizations;
  - **Urges** the members of the international community to exert their maximum efforts to promote renewed negotiations among Israelis and Palestinians for a genuine, just and sustainable peace;
  - **Implores** all actors in the region to refrain from violence, from incitement to violence, from exposing children to violence and confrontation, from oppression, occupation and injustice, and to invest instead in dialogue and negotiations as the only path to a just and sustainable peace for all people in the region;
  - **Urges** WCC member churches to support the heads of churches in Jerusalem in their efforts to preserve the Christian presence in the City of Jerusalem and the region, to safeguard the holy sites and church properties and the Status Quo, and for inter-religious dialogue and cooperation for peace.