



Ceasefire

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He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire. **Psalm 46:9 (NRSV)**

As I stare at this blank screen, a well of emotions wants to pour out. Grief, anger, and a deep sense of humanity's brokenness all swirl together. My heart is breaking at the daily images of suffering and rising death toll of our siblings in the Middle East. We see story after story of Israeli families grieving over the brutal loss of loved ones in acts of terror. We witness the growing carnage from rockets raining down on Gaza, escalating collective punishment on cities and civilians already fragile from years of occupation and economic isolation.

Tens of thousands have been wounded, and over 1,400 Israelis and 7,000 Palestinians have been killed. The suffering and carnage being experienced by these our fellow human beings is simply staggering as the cycle of violence continues.

John Paul Lederach, the well-known peacebuilder, wrote about the cycle of violence in an [article](#) following 9/11. Lederach asserted, "The way to defuse such a process is not by pursuing victory through strength. That's because whoever loses finds in the loss the seeds that give birth to the justification for renewed battle. The way to break such a cycle of justified violence is to step outside of it." While we know that the eventual resolution to the conflict will require a complex process of reconciliation and restitution on core disputes over land, settlements, human rights, Jerusalem, refugees, resources, and occupation, the need today is simple: we must step out of the cycle. We need a ceasefire.

This call for a ceasefire is growing. Last week, 18 members of Congress led by Rep. Cory Bush introduced a resolution calling for a ceasefire, which the United Church of Christ also endorsed. Additionally, Brazil introduced a UN Security Council Resolution calling for a "humanitarian pause" that

a UN Security Council Resolution calling for a “humanitarian pause” that was supported by twelve of fifteen council member nations. While the resolution was vetoed by the United States, it shows the growing call for a ceasefire around the world.

The Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and other faith leaders have all called for a ceasefire, and the call has been echoed throughout our UCC statements and advocacy on the conflict. A ceasefire must be implemented to allow more humanitarian aid to enter Gaza, provide time for negotiators to seek the return of hostages, and allow space for diplomacy and the calls for de-escalation, restraint, and a peace that addresses core issues to be heard.

Last Wednesday, I stood with thousands of Jewish peace advocates outside the Cannon House Office Building singing this phrase over and over, “ceasefire now...”. Knowing how much loss and anguish the Jewish community has experienced made this call all the more powerful. While some may dismiss it as naïve or one sided, I am reminded of Pope Francis’s call for the world to take just one side in the conflict—the side of peace with justice.

While my own hope has been shaken by these events, I am also reminded that our Just Peace witness is not only a call to work for justice that will lead to peace, but also a call to hold prophetic hope that peace is possible, even in the darkest moments. Let us take courage in that reminder, [be persistent in our advocacy](#), and echo together the growing chorus around the world pleading and praying for a ceasefire.

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