



## “I am thirsty”

Peter Makari

Global Relations Minister for the Middle East and Europe

Last March, when a child who was stuck under the rubble of a collapsed building in Gaza saw rescuers, he asked, “Where is my water? I am thirsty.”

As early as November 2023, the Bisan Center for Research and Development issued a report with the headline, “More than two million Palestinians face a risk of dying of thirst in the Gaza Strip.” The UN reported on April 8, 2025, that 91% of households in Gaza experienced water insecurity between February 24 and March 10, 2025. More than 90% of the Palestinians in Gaza face food insecurity, with prices of basic food sky high. The health of 60,000 children is currently at serious risk due to malnutrition.

Israel’s genocidal assault on Gaza has continued through its military campaign, which resumed in full force in mid-March. Since then, more than 1,000 Palestinians have been killed. This past Sunday, Palm Sunday, Israeli missiles directly struck long-time United Church of Christ partner, al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza, a ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> The 50,000 killed since October 2023 include medics, aid workers, journalists, and humanitarian responders, as well as almost 16,000 children. Almost all of Gaza’s 2.3 million people have been forcibly displaced, many of them several times. UN Secretary General António Guterres said last week, “More than an entire month has passed without a drop of aid into Gaza. No food. No fuel. No medicine. No commercial supplies. As aid has dried up, the floodgates of horror have reopened.” Israel has imposed a

<sup>1</sup> “Easter Amidst a Genocide,” a sermon by the Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac, cited in *Rooted in Faith and Justice* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2024), p. 111.

blockade in some form since 2007, and has occupied Gaza since 1967. It has also waged war in the West Bank, and continues to occupy parts of southern Lebanon and large swathes south of Damascus, in Syria.

This Sunday, Christians around the world celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, crucified on Good Friday and risen from the dead by Sunday morning. We are often reminded not to rush through Holy Week and the passion of Christ to get to the hope and joy of Easter, but to slow down and reflect on Christ's arrest and sentencing, and the agony he experienced on the cross.

In his meditation, "Easter Amidst a Genocide," offered during a vigil for Gaza on Holy Saturday last year, the Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac, Palestinian Lutheran pastor, said that when he heard the words of the boy pulled from the rubble, he was "reminded ... of the words of Jesus on the cross, when he cried out: 'I am thirsty.' He cried out 'I am thirsty' in solidarity with those being massacred by famine, siege, and bombardment. ... It is the cry of everyone oppressed by the injustice of power and humanity's silence and inability to put an end to tyranny and injustice. Jesus shouted, 'I am thirsty,' so they gave him vinegar to drink. They added more pain to his pain.... How cruel. Gaza is thirsty, and they [perhaps Roman soldiers or bystanders] gave Gaza vinegar."

More than a year and a half has passed since Hamas's October 7 attacks and Israel's brutal war. Gaza has been isolated by blockades for two decades, occupied for almost 57 years, and nearly three-quarters of its people are refugees from the time of the Nakba, or "catastrophe," when 750,000 Palestinians were displaced and dispossessed of their homes and communities in 1948. Much of the world recognizes Israel's injustice and violations of international law, and opposes it. In this country, people speak out at increasing personal risk, but the US continues its support of Israel. As the world's people thirst for justice – for Palestinians and for many others – they get vinegar, but persevere in the struggle.

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matthew 5:6). For Christians, the hope and liberation of Easter is at the center of our faith. Rev. Isaac concluded his reflection by stating, "Today the land of the resurrection calls you to act in hope and love. Together we are committed to end this genocide. Together we are committed to work for truth and justice." In

this season of hope, may it be so.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Peter Makari is the Global Relations Minister for the Middle East and Europe for the Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ.

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