



NCC 日本キリスト教協議会

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NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL IN JAPAN

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Rev. Kano YOSHITAKA
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NCCJ Statement for Peace between Palestine and Israel

I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. Genesis 9.15(NRSV)

On October 7, Hamas, which had effectively controlled the Palestinian Gaza Strip, launched a blitzkrieg attack on the Israeli side, taking many Israelis hostage. In response, the Israeli side retaliated, resulting in the loss of over 2,500 lives in both Gaza and Israel.

We stand with people worldwide in condemning this act by Hamas. However, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has classified it as a "war" and announced his intention to wage an all-out war against Hamas, including a massive military operation in Gaza. Furthermore, U.S. President Biden has pledged support for Israel during this state of warfare.

While we strongly condemn Hamas's armed attack, we also believe that Israel's response may exacerbate the situation further. Therefore, we firmly advocate for the President of the United States to focus on setting forth a policy and calling upon the world to establish a diplomatic dialogue forum to end the conflict, rather than taking sides with Israel.

The Zionist movement, based on the biblical idea of the "Promised Land of Canaan," led to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. However, it also marked the beginning of a history of oppression and exclusion of the indigenous Palestinian people. Since then, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have become refugees, forced into exile. The United Nations General Assembly in 1948 passed Resolution 194, which guaranteed the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland. This has been consistently ignored by Israel, leading to repeated armed conflicts between Palestinians and Israelis.

In September 1993, the Oslo Accords, mediated by Norway, set a path for the coexistence of a Palestinian state and an Israeli state, though many complex issues remained unresolved. However, this path faced setbacks and eventually collapsed in the 2000s, leading to the current situation. Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip still endure harsh realities, characterized by political and economic restrictions resembling colonial rule.

Hamas' recent actions are seen as a response to Israel's efforts to establish friendly relations with Arab countries, such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia, while seemingly disregarding the historical injustices faced by Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

We recall that in the Bible, God showed the land of Canaan to the sojourner Abraham and his people, and the Israelites, who once lived as slaves in Egypt. We are reminded that God, acknowledging the Israelites' affliction, commanded, "You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt." (Exodus 23:9; ESV).

The path to peace that Israel and the Palestinian Authority must follow is the only way to return to the biblical path of people who have both suffered as sojourners throughout history. The world, which bears an immeasurable



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historical responsibility for the suffering of these two peoples, should transcend political interests and work through the mediation of the United Nations to create a space for diplomatic dialogue leading to reconciliation and peace.

As Christians, we must spare no effort in praying for and continuing dialogue to realize this path of reconciliation and peace among various religions, including Judaism and Islam.

Let us earnestly pray for peace between Palestine and Israel, remembering that the "rainbow covenant" God made with Noah is a sign of reconciliation and peace with all life, and that the "rainbow" (keshet) is the form of a bow that has ceased to fight.

October 12, 2023

Rev. YOSHITAKA Kanoh, Moderator
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