



NSW Ecumenical Council Inc.

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6 October 2024

NSW Ecumenical Council calls for prayers for peace after one year of war in the Holy Land

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” Matthew 5:9

As we approach the twelfth month of the devastating Hamas-Israel war, the NSW Ecumenical Council, comprising members of 21 Christian churches, expresses grave concerns over its dire direction. For despite repeated calls for the de-escalation of violence from churches and the international community, the situation in the Holy Land continues to deteriorate, now with an emerging Hezbollah-Israel war.

Millions of refugees have been displaced and their number grows daily, their homes inaccessible, destroyed, or beyond repair. Hundreds of innocents are weekly killed or severely wounded by indiscriminate attacks. Countless others continue to endure hunger, thirst, and infectious disease. Among these are those languishing in captivity on all sides, who additionally face the risk of ill-treatment from their captors. Still others, far from the battlefields, have suffered unchecked attacks against their villages, pastures, and farmlands.

Throughout all this, ceasefire negotiations have dragged on interminably, with the leaders of the warring parties seemingly more concerned with political considerations than bringing an end to the pursuit of death and destruction. These repeated delays, coupled with other provocative acts, have only served to heighten tensions to the point where we stand at the precipice of a full-blown regional war in the Middle East. This will reverberate throughout NSW with the risk of increasing tensions in our multicultural community and threatening social cohesion.

In view of these alarming developments, the NSW Ecumenical Council calls on the Australian government to re-double its efforts to urge both sides to reach a rapid agreement for a ceasefire resulting in the end of the war, the release of all captives, the return of the displaced, the treatment of the sick and wounded, the relief of those who



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hunger and thirst, and the rebuilding of all public and private civilian structures that have been destroyed.

We call on the Minister of Foreign Affairs to re-double her efforts, without delay, to urge diplomatic discussions to address longstanding grievances, leading to concrete steps that promote a just and lasting peace in the region through the adoption of the internationally legitimate two-state solution.

We appeal to our Church members to pray for a ceasefire that will promote a vision of life and peace throughout the war-torn region, recalling Christ's words, quoted above: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9). During this time of extreme crisis, let us all recommit ourselves towards working and praying together in the hope that, by the grace of the Almighty, we might begin to realize this sacred vision of peace among all God's children.

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