



Missionary Society of St. Columban

General Council statement on the violence in Gaza

HONG KONG (August 5, 2014). As an international Catholic Missionary Society, we have lived and served for nearly 100 years in many countries around the world that have been scarred by war, dictatorships, military oppression and low-grade conflict. We know the devastation that violence causes in all its forms as a result of political intolerance and ideological aggression. Through our ministry with migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and displaced peoples, we encounter in a particular way the human suffering as a result of systemic violence.

Therefore, it is with deep sadness we watch the on-going and escalating killings, destruction, and repeatedly broken ceasefires in Gaza. We condemn the use of military force. We mourn the loss of so many innocent lives, especially children. We pray for the families who have lost their loved one and for the countless injured due to the bombings.

We join with Pope Francis, partner organizations like Pax Christi International, Caritas Internationales and with millions of people around the world when he implored during his recent Angelus speech from St. Peter's Square on July 27, "Brothers and sisters, never war, never war!". As a member organization of Pax Christi International (PCI), we endorse this statement from PCI of July 11, 2014,

Pax Christi cries out for an end to this new cycle of violence, believing that its roots are firmly planted in the persistent structural violence of Israel's occupation of Palestine. Both Palestinians and Israelis have a fundamental right to live in security and without fear, but true security will not be guaranteed for either until the occupation ends and each recognizes the human dignity of the other.

We applaud and encourage the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish peace and humanitarian groups working together in the region and globally which promote dialogue, reconciliation, and tolerance. We reject structural violence and advocate for replacing international policies of militarization with humanitarian assistance.

In particular, we endorse the sentiments expressed in the PCI letter to the U.S. government on July 22, 2014,

It is our view that these cease-fires failed to last because they did not address deeper injustices. After each new cease-fire Palestinians in Gaza remained subject to the legal, structural, and physical violence inherent in Israel's occupation and siege on Gaza, which constitutes collective punishment. This includes crushing restrictions and limitations placed on Palestinian movement, access to water and electricity, economic development, and other freedoms in both the West Bank and Gaza.

In countries where Columban are present, through education, advocacy, and prayer in collaboration with our local partners, we stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers who long for justice and peace in the Holy Land.

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Superior General

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