



A Briefing on the Situation in Gaza following President Trump's Recent Statements

February 2025

Background

For the nearly past 16 months, Israel has waged a genocidal war on the Palestinian people of Gaza, following the Palestinian Islamic resistance movement, Hamas', October 7, 2023 attack on Israel, killing 1200 Israelis, taking 251 hostages, and launching missiles. Since that time, almost all of the 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza have been forcibly displaced, many for multiple times. Israel has killed more than 47,000 Palestinians in Gaza in this campaign, a figure that is surely conservative, and that includes more than 13,000 children, according to the UN. Many tens of thousands of children have been injured and/or have become orphans, and at least a million are in need of psycho-social support. Medical and educational facilities have been damaged or destroyed, and whole communities have been completely demolished. President Trump himself described conditions in Gaza as "hell."

In the course of these months of war, Israel has also intensified its assault on the West Bank, especially in Jenin, Nablus, and Tulkarem in the north, and in Palestinian refugee camps. In the last few weeks, Israel's military has destroyed areas of Jenin. Settler violence against Palestinians has also risen significantly. President Trump stated that an announcement about the West Bank would be forthcoming in four weeks. Further, Israel has occupied parts of southern Lebanon and extended its reach beyond occupied Golan into Syria, raising concerns about possible Israeli territorial expansion, also illegal in international law.

Our Palestinian Christian partners consistently remind us that history did not begin on Oct. 7, 2023. Israel's occupation of Gaza has lasted since June 1967, including 17 years of blockade in which food, water, and medical supplies, as well as other basic needs, have been limited to a minimum. In the previous twenty years, Israeli has waged multiple military campaigns against the people in Gaza, including in 2006, 2008-9, 2012, 2014, and 2021.

Statements of President Trump on February 4, 2025

On Tuesday, February 4, President Donald Trump hosted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House in Washington, DC. It was the first meeting of a foreign leader in Pres. Trump's second term. In their joint press conference, Pres. Trump announced a vision for Gaza that is disturbing and dangerous, and one that Global Ministries soundly rejects.

Without revealing much detail, President Trump said that the United States would "take over" Gaza. He said, "We'll own it...level it out...[and] develop it;" that "I don't think people should be going back to Gaza," stating that "all" of the more than 2.3 million Palestinians who live there would be forced to leave. "If it's necessary," he said, the U.S military would be deployed there. President Trump also announced on Tuesday the continuation of the suspension of US support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the UN agency established in 1949 to provide for the needs of Palestine refugees following the 1948 *Nakba*, or "catastrophe," when more than three-quarters of a million Palestinians were displaced from their homes and

communities, becoming refugees. The *Nakba* was the beginning of a history of displacement and dispossession for the Palestinians.

The president's suggestion that the Palestinians in Gaza would be forcibly transferred to Egypt and Jordan has been denounced by both of those countries and others, yet Pres. Trump remains adamant. Such an expulsion would extend the ethnic cleansing that Israeli has perpetrated over these 15 months of war and genocide since October 2023.

What Our Partners Have to Say

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ enjoy deep and historic relationships with [10 partners](#) in Palestine and Israel. In keeping with our commitment to mutuality, de-colonization, and honoring our partners' wisdom, we take seriously their analysis and reflection on the current situation. As of this writing, two of our partners have issued statements in response to President Trump's statement.

On Feb. 6, the Christian Palestinian movement Kairos Palestine [wrote](#):

As Kairos Palestine, we categorically condemn and reject President Trump's plans, which amount to the forced displacement and erasure of our entire nation. We considered this neo-settler colonial plan evil, and "a sin against God and humanity", as stated in Kairos Palestine.... We call upon him, his government and allies, to respect the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, uphold their right to self-determination, and cease all efforts to undermine their existence in their homeland.

B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, [wrote](#) on Feb. 5:

The idea is deranged and reprehensible. Regardless of its feasibility, the very fact of its announcement is an indelible moral stain on all involved. Implementing such a plan would be a grave violation of international law.... These dangerous ideas should alarm anyone who believes in human rights and democracy, and urge us all to do everything we can to stop them from becoming reality.

Positions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ

The positions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ, through [General Assembly resolutions](#), [Synod resolutions](#), and leadership statements across decades offer evidence to our commitment to justice and peace in the Middle East, including resolutions that name ending occupation; supporting Palestinian refugee rights; affirming the use of economic measures such as boycotts, divestment, and sanctions; and calling for the constraint on US military assistance and aid in the region. Both churches have named the oppression of the Palestinian people as sin, called Israel's policies and practices apartheid, and named the reality of Israeli settler colonialism.

Most recently, our heads of communion, Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson and Rev. Terri Hord Owens, and heads of mission agencies, Rev. Shari Prestemon and Rev. Dr. LaMarco Cable, have

issued [UCC](#) and [Disciples](#) leadership statements that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza; that beyond a cease fire, root causes and historical claims must be addressed for there to be a lasting and just peace; and that naming genocide is not enough – action and accountability must accompany it.

President Trump’s proposal violates international laws on occupation, transfer of populations, self-determination, and the use of force. Our church leaders’ call for accountability would extend to the implementation of any such proposal. It also includes those US leaders who have enabled and participated in the massive death and destruction of the past 15 months, including the provision and sales of over \$30 billion in military aid, arms and equipment to Israel. The destruction of Gaza and its population by Israel with US weapons and support is a heinous crime whose perpetrators must be held accountable.

A deep concern is President Trump’s nominations for senior positions in his Administration, several of whom have expressed their full support for Israel while ignoring or suppressing Palestinian rights. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, Rep. Elise Stefanek, nominated to serve as the US Ambassador to the UN, and US Ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, have all made clear their strong support for Israel, revealing a disturbing Christian Zionist trend in this new administration, a theological framework that the Disciples and UCC have rejected.

President Trump’s proposal to occupy Gaza and to develop, presumably for commercial gain and not for the benefit of the Palestinian population that would be forcibly removed, must be stopped. Palestinian rights, and an end to Israeli occupation and apartheid, must be ensured.

Actions You Can Take

- Pray for the people of the Middle East, including the Palestinian Christian community and our partners
- Call the White House, your Senators, and your Congressional representative to express your opposition to President Trump’s proposal, and to affirm Palestinian rights to freedom, dignity, and justice. A just and lasting peace in the Middle East will only be attained by addressing root issues, and not by further violating human rights. (Several action alerts are available [here](#).)
- Support the responses of our partners [through Global Ministries](#) (please indicate “Middle East Crisis”), the [Disciples Week of Compassion](#), and the [UCC’s Global HOPE](#) special appeals for the crisis in the Middle East.
- Continue to educate yourselves on the host of issues involved, including visiting the Global Ministries’ [Middle East and Europe webpage](#), and reading and studying [Rooted in Faith and Justice](#).

Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ will continue to accompany our partners in Palestine and Israel as we have for decades, standing with them in solidarity and laboring with them for peace with justice. We invite the whole of the church to join us in our steadfast prayers, dedicated advocacy, and ongoing dialogue. Please stay updated by watching our [Middle East page on the Global Ministries website](#).