



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



UCC and Disciples Leaders Express Concern and Prayers in Current Crisis in Israel/Palestine

May 11, 2021

Over the last two weeks we have witnessed the escalation of tensions in Jerusalem, now expanded to Gaza, with a sense of profound concern and horror. What began as peaceful demonstrations opposing the anticipated eviction of several Palestinian families from the Shaikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem has rapidly become violent, with more than 300 people wounded by Israel in the city, and a deadly assault on the people of Gaza, with twenty-four people killed—among them nine children—the result of Israeli airstrikes on the Gaza Strip.

The eviction of Palestinians from Shaikh Jarrah is not new. The families of the neighborhood have experienced evictions multiple times since 2002. The families have lived there since the 1950s when Jordan granted the land for use by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to resettle Palestinians displaced by the *Nakba* (“catastrophe”) of 1948 when more than 750,000 Palestinians were dispossessed of their homes by the nascent State of Israel.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ remain active in advocating against the eviction of these Palestinians, having joined an [ecumenical letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken](#) (April 29) calling for immediate action to halt the evictions and displacement; and supporting a [letter sent by the families](#) of Shaikh Jarrah to the International Criminal Court (ICC) to include the evictions in the ICC’s pending investigation of the situation of Palestine (April 22). Our members continue to [take action](#) on this issue, calling on Congress to speak against the evictions as well. While the Israeli Supreme Court has delayed a final decision on the eviction until next month, peaceful demonstrators—Palestinians, Israeli Jews, and others—opposing the evictions in Jerusalem have been met with violence of the Israeli police and arrests, including at al-Aqsa mosque.

We strongly oppose these evictions, which are a continuation of the decades-long Israeli practice of Palestinian dispossession and displacement, and which must end for there to be any chance of peace with justice. **We abhor the continued patterns of Israeli police violence against civilians in the streets and places of worship in Jerusalem that we have witnessed far too often in recent months.** *The US*—which sends \$3.8 billion in aid to Israel each year—*must hold Israel accountable* for these blatant violations of human rights, a main tenet of the Biden presidency. **And we are deeply disturbed by the rapid escalation that has led to Israel’s already deadly and [promised intensification](#) of its strikes on Gaza.** *We call upon the US to do all it can to restrain Israel’s use of force*, recognizing that the people of Gaza already live under the constraints of a highly restrictive blockade.

In these days, we have heard the cries of our partners. The YWCA of Palestine, whose headquarters is in Shaikh Jarrah, has [stated](#), “The world has a moral obligation to stop these crimes against humanity.” The Heads of Churches in Jerusalem [assert](#), “These concerning developments, whether at the Al Aqsa Mosque or in Sheikh Jarrah, violate the sanctity of the people of Jerusalem and of Jerusalem as the City of Peace.” And the Middle East Council of Churches [reaffirmed](#) that “lifting the occupation of the Palestinian people and enjoying their freedom, dignity and full rights are the means that lead to lasting stability and peace in the region.” We stand in solidarity with our partners and for the tenets of our faith in opposing actions that violate human dignity.

We remember Jesus’ words as he wept over Jerusalem, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!” (Matthew 23:37)

We fervently pray for our Palestinian partners and for the people too long suffering under occupation and fear, and that a peace with justice will prevail, and we commit to continue to oppose the injustices that we see.

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