



This week, we witnessed massive Israeli aggression into the densely populated northern West Bank Palestinian refugee camp in the city of Jenin. Named “Operation Home and Garden,” the full-fledged military assault included drone attacks and ground troops, resulting in the death of twelve Palestinians, including one teenager, displacement of thousands of Palestinians, and the destruction of roads, water, and electrical networks in the area. Israel has regularly raided occupied Jenin and Nablus for months, but this assault was the most intensive in two decades.

While Israel has withdrawn its forces for the time being, calling the operation a “success,” the military occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza remains firmly in place as it has since 1967, with no pathway toward peace with justice in sight. Palestinians killed by Israeli military continues to increase, with 2023 on pace to become the deadliest year. In the meantime, Israel continues to expand its hold on West Bank land at the expense of Palestinian rights. Just last week, Israel approved an additional 5,700 settlement units. Settlements are illegal under international law, and settler violence toward Palestinians has only continued to increase – a reality that, according to B’Tselem, state policies and actions enable – with no accountability.

The most recent attack draws our attention once again to the lack of rights accorded Palestinian refugees, who number more than 5.5 million, according to the United Nations. The Jenin refugee camp was established in the early 1950s to provide shelter for Palestinians displaced in the *Nakba* (Arabic for “catastrophe”) of 1948 at the establishment of Israel and the subsequent displacement and dispossession of more than 750,000 Palestinians. It is estimated that more than 18,000 Palestinian refugees live in the Jenin camp. The United Nations affirmed the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes or receive compensation for their losses in its Resolution 194 (1948), but Israel continues to deny them those rights.



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The US, for its part, has said that Israel has the right to security and self-defense. Such statements ignore US complicity through its provision of weaponry and military aid, even in violation of US laws – such as the Foreign Assistance Act, the Arms Export Control Act, and the Leahy Laws – which forbid such provisions when human rights are violated or when going beyond internal security.

This recent operation and its outcomes only encourage continued Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation and discrimination, which is consistent with the international legal definition of the crime of apartheid.

As Christians, we pray and work for peace for all people, and have been persistent in our commitment and efforts to seek justice in Palestine and Israel. We abhor this week’s assaults on Palestinian lives, communities, and rights. We are deeply concerned that this operation will result in an escalated risk of extended violence. We urge our own governments to use their leverage – and apply existing laws – to hold Israel accountable for such violations which amount to collective punishment of a people. And we fervently pray for justice to prevail for Palestinians, Israelis, and the people of the Middle East.

Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer General Minister and President United Church of Christ	Rev. Teresa “Terri” Hord Owens General Minister and President Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson Associate General Minister, Wider Church Ministries United Church of Christ Co-Executive, Global Ministries	Rev. LaMarco A. Cable President, Disciples Overseas Ministries Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Co-Executive, Global Ministries

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