

**PAX Catholic Community Calls for Ceasefire and Lasting Peace  
in the Middle East**  
April 4, 2024

We, the members of Pilgrims After Christ (PAX) – an inclusive Catholic Christian community focused on faith, service, and action for justice — cannot remain silent in the face of widespread death and destruction in Gaza. We witness vengeance and retribution leading to untold suffering. We see a region trapped in structures that promote conflict, with the prospect of trauma and hatred for generations to come.

**We call on the U.S. government to engage far more decisively in ending the violence and suffering by fully exercising its leverage over the parties in order to promote an end to the fighting, deliver humanitarian assistance, and move to a peaceful resolution. We specifically call on the U.S. government to more rigorously enforce already existing legal restrictions on use of U.S. lethal aid. These include withholding aid from those known to abuse human rights ("Leahy Law") and requiring that recipients of lethal aid allow humanitarian aid into conflict zones. We fully support President Biden's current call for an "immediate ceasefire." Further, future military assistance to Israel should depend on Israel's willingness to respect international law and engage in serious peace negotiations with legitimate Palestinian authorities. We also call for the creation of space in which trauma suffered by both sides can be addressed, dialogue reestablished, and healing begun.**

In the wake of the Hamas terror attacks of October 7, unprecedented in scope and brutality, we acknowledge the suffering of the people of Israel. We also affirm Israel's right to live in peace and security, free from the threat of external or internal violence.

At the same time, we affirm the right of Palestinians to live in peace and security. We recoil at the ongoing, wholesale destruction of Gaza, the deaths of tens of thousands, including large numbers of women and children, the denial of humanitarian assistance, and the bombing of homes, hospitals, and other critical civilian infrastructure.

Under the guise of defeating and dismantling Hamas, Israel's leaders are sowing seeds of deepening resentment and hatred that threaten to weaken Israel's security and perpetuate the cycle of violence present since modern Israel's creation. Absent a fresh perspective, and the requisite leadership on both sides, the suffering will only deepen and draw in external actors seeking to benefit.

Quoting from the March 28, 2024 Jesuit statement on Gaza, we firmly believe "the choice of death over life, vengeance over reconciliation, violence over dialogue is a choice and not a fated destiny."

We call for an immediate end to the fighting, the release of all hostages in Gaza and of the thousands of Palestinian prisoners, including children, unjustly detained in Israel, and the

immediate delivery of humanitarian aid sufficient to avert a famine in Gaza and address medical needs. We also want a process toward just peace that engages ordinary Israelis and Palestinians, young people, women and experienced practitioners of nonviolence and trauma healing. We join with peacemakers everywhere who seek an end to the occupation, a lasting peace, justice, and security for all Israelis and all Palestinians.