

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MONDAY, AUGUST 19, 2024**

**CONTACT:** Eli McCarthy, [emccarthy@franciscanaction.org](mailto:emccarthy@franciscanaction.org), 1-510-717-8867  
(WhatsApp)

### **U.S. CHRISTIANS APPEAL FOR CEASEFIRE WITH DISRUPTIVE NONVIOLENT PROTEST AT GAZA BORDER**

GAZA —On August 18th, U.S. Christians for Ceasefire engaged in a powerful, disruptive, and prayerful nonviolent action in a military zone near the crossing into Gaza today. The action disrupted the normalization of violence and dehumanization. The 12 U.S. and 3 Palestinian Christian leaders appealing for a just peace through song, prayer, scripture, kneeling, and signs were confronted by Israeli authority at the Kerem Shalom crossing with the wall to Gaza in the background as trucks with tanks came in and out of the lot. Soldiers in jeeps drove in and around us as a show of intimidation.

Before the action, the delegation joined an Interfaith Prayer Service with Rabbis for Human Rights and a Muslim sheikh at the Ancient Maon Synagogue, 2428 Eshkol Regional Council near Gaza 1 km from Khan Younis. As they prayed with passion and tears, piercing bombs were heard in the background and an air siren went off. The participants laid flat on the ground with hands over their heads before finishing their prayer.

On August 19th, Christians for Ceasefire held a vigil in front of the building in Jerusalem where Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken will meet.

Previously, on August 16th, the delegation offered a nonviolent protective presence to a community in the West Bank facing Israeli settler violence. The Christian leaders visited Uum Jamal (20 miles south of Bet Shean), a Bedouin Community which decided to evacuate from the valley after facing sustained Israeli settler violence for a week. Even while trying to evacuate, the village still faced the settlers' attacks. Children were frightened to the point of vomiting. The people were beaten physically and women sexually harassed. The settlers were young men bearing clubs, sticks, and other weapons who acted with impunity, given recent policy shifts in Israel granting settlers more control in the occupied territory. The Christian delegation stayed with the community for a period of time, experienced intimidation and harassment by Israeli soldiers, and then engaged in rapid advocacy with the U.S. State Department and U.S. Embassy to exert pressure on the Israeli government to stop the settler violence. The latest update is the settler violence at Uum Jamal subsided, though only enough that it has allowed them to be forced from their homes.

As the U.S. Democratic National Convention begins this week, we expect many disruptions and demonstrations for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza. We urge President Biden and Vice President Harris to not merely urge a permanent ceasefire, but also to withhold further arms shipments to Israel for the leverage to achieve such a ceasefire.

Members of [Christians for Ceasefire](#) in the U.S. and Palestinian Christian partners, such as Sabeel, were participating in a just peace delegation in Palestine from August 13-20, 2024, in response to the mass atrocities taking place in Gaza and the West Bank. [Sabeel](#) is an Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center focused on justice, inclusivity, and nonviolence. There was a direct invitation from [Christian leaders in Palestine](#) to the delegation

Committed to the dignity of all people, the delegation seeks a just and lasting peace for everyone. This includes, at minimum, a permanent ceasefire in Gaza, the release of all political prisoners and hostages, and an end to the Israeli occupation.

This just peace delegation of solidarity and accompaniment has met with key religious leaders, families of Palestinian prisoners, and Palestinian communities under threat, as well as visiting the organization supporting families of the hostages and meeting with Israeli organizers. They also packed food for truck shipments into Gaza. They sought to offer some forms of nonviolent protective presence in the West Bank, in addition to their prayerful nonviolent witness action. The delegation seeks to help expose human rights violations, while strengthening and encouraging U.S. Christian advocacy for a just peace.

This effort is one in a series of religious delegations to Palestine, including Rabbis for Ceasefire, Christians for Ceasefire, and multi-faith delegations.

### [Itinerary of Delegation](#)

#### ***Participants in the delegation include:***

Mercy Aiken, Network of Evangelicals for the Middle East; Prof. Ken Butigan, DePaul University, Catholic; Rev. Larry Clark, United Methodist; Rev. Paul Jeffrey, United Methodist; Prof. Kelly Johnson, Catholic; Prof. Eli McCarthy, Georgetown University, Catholic; Rev. John Paarlberg, Reformed Church of America; Levi Pierpont, Air Force veteran (friend of Aaron Bushnell); Robert Shine, Pax Christi USA, Catholic; Jessica Sun, Leadership Team, Pax Christi Young Adult Caucus, Catholic; Dr. Rev. Lewis Tait Jr., Village Church DC; Scott Wright, MDiv., Pax Christi Ambassador of Peace, Catholic.

XXXX

#### *Quotes:*

Amidst the tension, distrust, and trauma, Jesus' way of courageous nonviolence offers a path to break the cycle of violence and cultivate a just peace for all people. I particularly call on the U.S. President Biden and Vice President Harris to not merely urge a permanent ceasefire, but also to withhold further arms shipments to Israel for the leverage to achieve such a ceasefire. *Prof. Eli McCarthy, Georgetown University*

For nearly eighty years, Israel has subjugated the Palestinian people. The apartheid and genocide being carried out is inherent to the Zionist project, largely funded by U.S. taxpayers. This violence is misconstrued as a religious conflict. In reality, it is about the attempted expulsion by

Israelis of the Palestinian people from their land. Liberation for Palestine is a precondition for any just peace, a cause to which U.S. Christians and everyone must commit ourselves. *Robert Shine (he/him), former national chair, Pax Christi USA*

“I am following in the footsteps of other Quakers, bearing witness to the suffering and oppression of Palestinians in the West Bank. This trip further strengthens my resolve to continue my efforts back home, both in pressuring the United States government to declare a full arms embargo, and making it impossible for my communities to ignore the genocide in Gaza.” *Levi Pierpont, Air Force veteran (friend of Aaron Bushnell)*

“As an African American I can identify with the Palestinian people with their backs against the wall. Be pro-Palestinian is not antisemitic but walking in solidarity with a people are experienced occupation since 1947. As a tax paying American citizen I ask the Biden & Harris administration along with the congress to stop funding genocide.” *Dr. Rev. Lewis Tait Jr., Village Church DC*

"Any state that teaches its people that violence is the only way to security dehumanizes both the oppressed and the oppressors. Justice must be had and Palestinians must be free -- and in this way, Israelis may become free too." *Jessica Sun, Leadership Pax Christi USA Young Adult Caucus*

“We are called to follow Jesus' self Identification: Luke 4.18-19 ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’” *Rev. Larry Clark*

“As an American Christian, who has had the privilege of spending much time in the Holy Land, my heart is broken for the unspeakable suffering in Gaza, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel. My country and my religious community has done much to prolong this “conflict” by not recognizing and dealing with the roots of the problems. I repent for this. Enough is enough. It is time to be serious about creating a better future for all the people living between the river and the sea.” *Mercy Aiken, Network of Evangelicals for the Middle East*

“I join with the religious leaders we met this week in calling for a just and lasting peace for Palestine and Israel. This will not be achieved by a \$20 billion arms deal announced this week by the White House. The suffering these weapons create was clear in the many encounters we have had here. Now is the time for active and effective nonviolence, not weapons, to build a more humane future.” *Prof. Ken Butigan*

“As U.S. citizens, we oppose the US funding that is supporting Israel's unjust attacks on civilians. As Christians, we pray and work for the day when Mount Zion will be a place of peace for all nations.” *Prof. Kelly Johnson*

“As U.S. citizens we ask God for forgiveness for the way our nation has contributed to the horrific death and destruction in Gaza. We have heard over and over again: the U.S. is enabling

the war with our weapons and political cover, and the silence of too many Christian leaders.”

*Scott Wright, Pax Christi USA*