



## **Anglican Bishops' statement on Israel-Palestine conflict Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia**

War continues to destroy people's lives in the Holy Land. The current cycle of violence in this long conflict brings us a stream of images of bloodied bodies and the anguished cries and faces of children, women and men – both Palestinian and Israeli. We're seeing homes destroyed, lives shattered and hope for peace strangled.

The bishops of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand, and Polynesia, meeting together in Auckland this week, recognise that fellow Anglicans are among the millions of people who are caught up in this conflict, in Gaza, the West Bank and Israel.

The bishops express their horror at the continuing acts of violence and join international voices in calling for an immediate and lasting ceasefire by both warring parties to this conflict.

The bishops deplore all deaths of Palestinians and Israelis and urge an immediate ceasefire as a necessary first step towards a just and permanent peace in the Holy Land.

Anglican Archbishop Don Tamihere, Te Pihopa o Aotearoa, said: "Hospitals and civilian infrastructure are protected under International Humanitarian Law. Such niceties of law are not protecting the sick and wounded in Al Ahli Anglican Hospital and other hospitals in Gaza. There are no winners in war: so often, it is innocent people who are maimed and killed."

The conflict between Israel and Palestine is a wound that has continued to fester. Various diplomatic efforts to find a solution have failed because of the unwillingness to honour international agreements. Violence will never be a solution.

Archbishop Sione Ulu'ilakepa, Anglican Bishop of Polynesia, said: "Our common humanity is honoured when we choose peace, not war. As Bishops, we endorse the work of those groups and institutions in Israel and Palestine who work for peace, justice, and reconciliation. This is the path that we advocate for peace in the Holy Land."

The bishops jointly ask: "Our government and diplomatic authorities to advocate for an immediate ceasefire and the opening and ongoing safeguarding of humanitarian corridors which freely permit the movement of essential food and medical supplies into Gaza.

"We cannot and must not let anger lead us into antisemitism or Islamophobia. Let us remember that there are innocent victims on both sides of the conflict. To our fellow interfaith religious leaders, we ask: let us unite in prayer and action for a lasting peace.

“We ask the people of Aotearoa New Zealand and the South Pacific to pray for peace and to support aid appeals for those impacted by this humanitarian crisis.”

In Psalm 130 we hear: ‘Out of the depths I cry to you O Lord; hear my voice. O let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleading.’

In the spirit of this ancient sacred writing, we pray and invite others to pray with the Archbishop of Jerusalem, Hosam Nahum, this prayer:

O God of all justice and peace:

We cry out to you in the midst of this pain and trauma of violence and fear which prevails in the Holy Land.

Be with those who need you in these days of suffering.

We pray for people of all faiths - Jews, Muslims and Christians - and for all people of the land.

We pray, O Lord, for an end to violence and the establishment of peace.

We call for you to bring justice and equity to the peoples.

Guide us into your kingdom where all people are treated with dignity and honour as your children - for to all of us you are our Heavenly Father. Amen.