

The Sisters of Benet Hill Monastery endorse the Christians for Ceasefire Campaign of
the Franciscan Action Network (FAN)

March 31, 2024

We have taken this step as a community during Holy Week to more fully respond to pleas from Pope Francis and other faith leaders to **pray and act** for peace in the Middle East.

We made this decision after grounding ourselves in prayer, scripture, and the Catholic Social Teaching principle that the sacredness and dignity of human life is the foundation for a moral society. During this Holy Week, we remember that Jesus was both a Palestinian and a devout Jew who was an innocent victim put to death by the occupying Roman Empire.

We acknowledge the tortured history of diplomatic efforts by other nations in the Middle East, some unilateral and misguided, others bilateral and well-intentioned. We recognize that atrocities and provocations have been committed by all parties for hundreds of years. We also acknowledge that, in this current conflict, both Hamas and Israel have committed horrible violence resulting in massive loss of lives, horrific injuries to the bodies and minds of survivors, generational trauma, and loss of cultural treasures and the necessary infrastructure for a functioning society.

Yet, because we are people of the Resurrected Christ who has shown us the way to abundant life for all creation, **we dare to hope and act**. We firmly believe that neither war nor other forms of retribution will yield the accountability that is needed for healing and reconciliation. We seek a new way, modeled on the nonviolent teachings of Jesus.

Like other organizations and individuals endorsing the campaign, we believe that our focus must shift to supporting diplomacy, creating structures for accountability and reconciliation, and investing in strategic nonviolent peacebuilding, including through Co-Existence Communities (e.g. *Parents Circle* and *Combatants for Peace*) already existing in the Palestine region.

The most-pressing goals of this campaign then, are for people of faith to advocate with our political leaders for “gestures of peace,” including an immediate and sustained bilateral ceasefire between all parties in the conflict, and:

1. A halt to the provision of offensive weapons that are fueling the conflict, and
2. A release of all hostages (Israeli and other nationalities), and
3. A release of all Palestinian prisoners held without due process, and
4. A robust humanitarian assistance response, including the renewed funding of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and
5. An end to the siege of Gaza.

Longer-term goals of the campaign include:

6. An investment of resources in a political process to address root causes, accountability of harm, and a lasting just peace.
7. Fair and just negotiations to name and terminate any illegal occupations / settlements of Palestinian land.

We invite Christians and people of other faith traditions to explore and endorse this campaign and/or to join similar efforts. We also invite you to join us in acting for a just peace in upcoming interfaith efforts to change the hearts and minds of our elected leaders.

“Never has the use of violence brought peace in its wake.

War begets war, violence begets violence.”

Pope Francis, Angelus, September 1, 2013