

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon endorses statement to end siege of Gaza

At their January 23 Board Meeting the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) Board of Directors expressed its support of the following statement calling for an end to the siege of Gaza [pdf of letter also attached] issued by the Patriarchs and Christian Churches in Jerusalem.

The Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon Board also reiterated its historic commitment to the end of all violence in the area. The board called upon Israeli and Palestinian leaders to exert their influence to end the blockade of food, medicine and fuel supplies into Gaza, the bombings and assassinations of political leaders, and the firing of Kassam rockets into Israel. EMO Board President Rev. Kent Harrop said, "We call upon all Christians and people of faith to join together to work and pray for the security and peace that is the right of all people."

Letter issued by the Patriarchs and Christian Churches in Jerusalem:

In the Name of God, end the siege over Gaza.

One and a half million people imprisoned and without proper food or medicine. 800,000 without electricity supply; this is illegal collective punishment, an immoral act in violation of the basic human and natural laws as well as International Law. It cannot be tolerated anymore. The siege over Gaza should end now.

Voices from our people there say "We feel the threat of being exterminated by this siege"

In the Name of God, we, the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem and the Holy Land urge the International Community, President Bush and the leaders of Israel, to put an end to this suffering and call upon Israel to activate Prime Minister Salam Fayyad's initiative for Palestinian responsibility control of the boarders thus ensuring sufficient normal flow of medicine, food, fuel and goods to Gaza.

We urge the International Community and the European Union to act according to their recent pleas. There is no time to waste when Human life is endangered.

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MEMBER DENOMINATIONS

African Methodist Episcopal Church ■ American Baptist Churches of Oregon ■ Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) ■ Christian Methodist Episcopal Church ■ Church of the Brethren ■ Community of Christ
Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon ■ Episcopal Diocese of Oregon ■ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America ■ Greek Orthodox Church ■ Presbyterian Church (USA)—Presbytery of the Cascades
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) ■ Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Portland ■ United Church of Christ ■ United Methodist Church ■ Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

We urge the Palestinian Leadership to unite in ending their differences for the sake of their people in Gaza. Put the differences aside and deal with this crisis for the good of all human beings demonstrating that you care for your brothers and sisters who have suffered enough already. We would say to all concerned parties; while ever you persist in firing rockets into Israel you encourage public opinion outside this Land to feel there is a justification for this siege.

We urge Israel to act responsibly and to immediately end this inhuman siege. To deny children and civilians their necessary basic commodities are not the ways to security but rather throw the region into further and more dangerous deterioration. This siege will not guarantee the end to rocket firing, but will only increase the bitterness and suffering and invite more revenge, while the innocents keep dying. True Peace building is the only way to bring the desired security.

We pray for the day when the people of Gaza will be free from Occupation, from political differences, from violence and from despair. We pray for the Israelis and Palestinians to respect human life and God's love for every human life, and to take all possible measures to end this suffering. Only bold steps towards just Peace and ending the violence will protect the Human life and dignity of both People.

With the Prophet we keep praying and hoping;

*" A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.
In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;*

*he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth.
In his law the islands will put their hope" (Isaiah 42:3-4)*

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon is a statewide association of Christian denominations—including Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox bodies—congregations, ecumenical organizations and interfaith partners working together to improve the lives of Oregonians through community ministry programs, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, environmental ministry and public policy advocacy.

For more information about EMO's peacemaking program, contact Jan Elfers at (503) 221-1054 or jelfers@emoregon.org.