



**Te Huinga o ngā Pihopa
Katorika o Aotearoa**

New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference

**The Archbishops and Primates
of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia**

20 October 2023

Joint Anglican-Catholic bishops' statement on Israel-Palestine conflict

War is once again destroying people's lives in the Holy Land. This new cycle of violence in this long conflict brings us new 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 Anglican and Catholic Bishops of Aotearoa New Zealand, meeting together in Wellington this week, jointly express their horror at the latest acts of violence and join international voices in calling for an immediate ceasefire.

Anglican Archbishop Phillip Richardson said: "Hospitals and civilian infrastructure are protected under International Humanitarian Law. Such niceties of law did not protect the wounded in Al Ahli Anglican Hospital and the people who were seeking sanctuary and protection. 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.

Bishop Steve Lowe, President of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference said: "As Bishops, we endorse the work of those groups and institutions in Israel and Palestine who work for peace, justice, and reconciliation. Such work recognises our common humanity. 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.

"In this very emotional time, we cannot 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'.

"To the people of Aotearoa New Zealand; we urge you 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."

The bishops concluded: "May we too be attentive to those who call out to us from the depths of despair and destruction. May we commit ourselves to being instruments of peace."

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