

STATED CLERK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Acting Stated Clerk condemns violence between Israel and Hamas

Bronwen Boswell calls for immediate end to bloodshed

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) - October 13, 2023

Deuteronomy 5:17 “*You shall not kill.*”

The devastation and loss of life in both Israel and the Gaza Strip in the last few days has been horrific. No words can describe the anguish and suffering of the people directly impacted by and caught up in the violence of these attacks. As we watch the recently declared war unfold, our hearts break for all whose loved ones have died, are wounded, missing, displaced, or taken hostage.

Horrific actions committed by Hamas and the violent response by Israel have exacerbated deep wounds, inflicting physical and emotional pain and suffering. We acknowledge that the people of Palestine and Hamas are not one in the same, and we stand in solidarity with the people of Palestine and Israel who seek peace. Hamas does not. We condemn the violence that has taken place in recent days, and we grieve the decades of oppression that have led to this violence.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) stands firm in its support of Palestinians and their right to live free in their land, without occupation, aggression, and bloodshed. We support and protect Israel's right to exist as a free and sovereign nation. In the [Confession of 67](#), the church states:

9.45 b: *The church, in its own life, is called to practice the forgiveness of enemies and to commend to the nations as practical politics the search for cooperation and peace.*

9.46 c: *The reconciliation of humankind through Jesus Christ makes it plain that enslaving poverty in a world of abundance is an intolerable violation of God's good creation.*

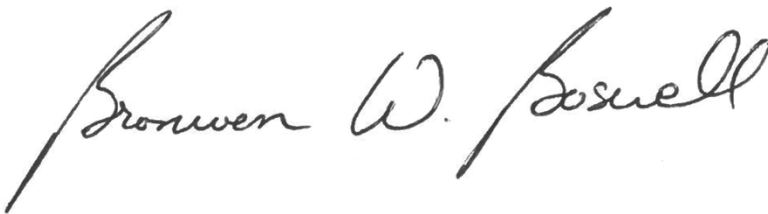
Hamas has caused significant damage and destruction to Israeli towns. Israeli bombings are leveling entire neighborhoods in Gaza, leaving survivors with a lack of shelter, adequate food, water, and necessities. Hospitals are losing power, putting the health of the injured, newborns, and others at risk.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) urges the Israeli government to honor the Palestinian people with the same freedom they offer their own citizens and continue to do so amid this crisis. We also urge Hamas to release the hostages and refrain from additional

violence. Regardless of our differences and strong views on matters of human rights, bombing innocent people, killing, and kidnapping children are never acceptable.

We urge all leaders to immediately put an end to the bloodshed, release those who are captured and held hostage, end the fighting, and open humanitarian corridors to get medical attention to everyone who is in need. We recognize that this is a very difficult and painful matter that generates strong emotions and reactions. Earlier this week, the Office of the Stated Clerk issued a call for prayer as an immediate response to the tragedy. Since then, we have been thoughtful and prayerful in discerning what to say and have worked with our colleagues who are closest to this unfolding crisis. The prayer has been taken down with this new response. The PC(USA) Office of Public Witness has also issued a [Statement of Lament for Israel and Palestine](#).

If you are able to support crisis response and recovery efforts in the Middle East, please donate to account [DR000081](#).

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bronwen W. Boswell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bronwen" and last name "Boswell" clearly legible, and the middle initial "W." in the center.

Rev. Bronwen Boswell
Acting Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)