

Statement by the Synod of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa

Meeting in the season of Lent, when we are invited to turn again to the God of justice and love, we, the Bishops of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, meeting in Cape Town, were deeply distressed to hear testimonies from four people who were part of a delegation which visited Israel and the occupied West Bank territories in December 2023.

Their accounts of the arbitrary application of laws against Palestinians and the denial of their basic human right to water, coupled with the steady take-over of Palestinian land, were a reminder of the similarities between what is transpiring in Palestine at present and what took place in South Africa under apartheid. In the light of events since the killings and hostage-taking of 7th October 2023, the resolutions of our church's 2023 Provincial Standing Committee, which declared Israel as an apartheid state and called for better-informed pilgrimages to the land called holy, seem prophetic

We received the testimonies as Bishops who are committed to a world in which all of God's people, of whatever nationality, religious affiliation or background, enjoy security and dignity, and who view Palestine and Israel as nations which have a special place in our faith tradition. Challenged by Palestinians over the world church's relative silence in the face of the slaughter of the people of Gaza, we declare: "Not in our name!"

We condemn the financial and military assistance being given to all warring parties in the region. As the number of Palestinians killed in Gaza approaches 30,000, most of them women and children, we express our particular concern at the continuing supply of weapons to Israel by Western powers. We condemn the genocidal rhetoric of Israeli leaders and the denial of food, water and medicines, and we call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. We call for the release of all hostages in Gaza and Israel and for immediate and effective measures to facilitate humanitarian aid to all the people of Gaza, including allowing full access to basic necessities. And we commit ourselves to praying for a just peace and to acting as peacemakers.

February 27th, 2024