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Expressing grave concern over the escalation of military operations in Gaza, the WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit calls for immediate cessation of hostilities in Gaza.

22 July 2014

The World Council of Churches is deeply saddened and gravely concerned by the continued escalation of the military operations in Gaza, human devastation on every side, and the disproportionately high number of Palestinian civilian casualties, including women and children.

As well as the Israeli strikes against civilians and civilian infrastructure in Gaza, the Council condemns the indiscriminate firing of rockets against Israeli civilian targets by Hamas and the positioning of rocket launchers in close proximity to civilian populations.

The Council appeals to all parties to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. The indiscriminate and disproportionate killing of civilians in the context of an armed conflict is strictly prohibited by international humanitarian law.

Hostilities must cease. Israel, Palestine and the surrounding region must be offered the hope of peace: a peace based in justice, a lasting peace that may lead toward reconciliation.

The World Council of Churches calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities in Gaza, and for restrictions on the movement of persons and goods into and out of the Gaza Strip to be lifted so that urgent humanitarian needs can be dealt with.

This latest resort to armed conflict – and the consequent intolerable suffering inflicted on families and communities – can do nothing to promote a just and sustainable peace for Israelis and Palestinians. On the contrary, it serves only to perpetuate the deadly cycle of violence, stoking the fires of mutual demonization and division, and further diminishing the vision of two peoples living side-by-side in peaceful co-existence.

Peace in Israel and Palestine will come only through the restoration of compassion between human beings, through seeking together common paths towards justice and peace, and through a genuine commitment to creating the basis for future generations of Israelis and Palestinians to live side-by-side in peace.

Hence the WCC calls for the resumption of direct peace talks to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable peace based upon a two-state solution along internationally recognized borders.

But today, as war continues to rage in Gaza, we pray that Israelis and Palestinians will re-discover the things that make for peace.

The peoples of Palestine and Israel deserve to live in peace and dignity.

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit
WCC general secretary