



MEDIA RELEASE

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Act for Peace and National Council of Churches in Australia support call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza

Act for Peace, the international humanitarian agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia, fully supports the Australian Government's call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza.

The Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese joined the Prime Ministers of Canada and New Zealand calling for a ceasefire in a [joint statement](#) last Thursday, in response to Israel's planned military operations in the Gazan city of Rafah where more than 1 million Palestinians have sought shelter.

"The situation in Gaza is catastrophic with millions of people without a place to call home or food for their families," says CEO of Act for Peace, Elijah Buol OAM. "Over 1.8 million people have been forcibly displaced since the war began in October last year that has claimed tens of thousands of people's lives."

"We fully support the Government's call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire alongside 152 other countries at the UN General Assembly. Working together to achieve a sustainable ceasefire is required to provide safety for the one million people who have sought shelter in Rafah and to meet the urgent basic needs of the people whose lives have been devastated in Gaza."

Act for Peace has worked with the Near East Council of Churches (NECC) in Gaza for over 15 years providing a range of health and community services in the region.

"Our NECC partner on the ground, who ran three health clinics in Gaza, has been severely compromised in their ability to provide much needed aid," Mr Buol says. "They too were sadly impacted by the war, losing clinics and lives in the bombings."

Today Act for Peace is working with their NECC partner (together with the UN Health Cluster and the World Health Organization) through the Rafah Clinic to provide health care services to around 400 patients a day.

"A sustainable ceasefire will allow for the safe and increased humanitarian access required to help the millions of people whose lives have been devastated by the conflict," Mr Buol says.

On Tuesday, the UN Security Council's resolution demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, was voted in favour by 13 council members but was vetoed by the United States, stating it could jeopardise ongoing Gaza peace talks. It was the third time that the US has vetoed a draft resolution since the war began in October. The United States have since proposed an alternative draft resolution calling for a temporary ceasefire.

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The international humanitarian agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia.
ABN 86 619 970 188 Locked Bag Q199, Queen Victoria Building NSW 1230, Australia.

President of the National Council of Churches Australia Rev. John Gilmore reiterated the call made on October 20, on behalf of 13 national churches, to “end the armed conflict, protect civilians, free the hostages”.

“We are praying for all affected by this violence, Israelis and Palestinians alike, and for an urgent peaceful and permanent resolution to this conflict,” Rev. Gilmore says. “Innocent Palestinian and Israeli civilians cannot and must not be the casualties of the ongoing war.”

The renewed call for a sustainable ceasefire in Gaza by Act for Peace and the National Council of Churches in Australia, comes one day after the meeting of World Council of Churches’ General Secretary, Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay, with the Israeli President, Isaac Herzog, on February 20 to discuss the current situation in Israel and Palestine and the war in Gaza. Access to humanitarian assistance in Gaza was a topic high on the agenda.

According to the [World Council of Churches](#), the two leaders agreed on the importance of working towards a ceasefire and the role of religions in helping to create a world in which peace, security and safety exist for all people.

On February 19, the day before being formally received by the Israeli President, Rev. Pillay met with the Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas, in Ramallah, West Bank. During the meeting, President Abbas affirmed that his Government is prepared to participate in dialogue processes with the Israeli government to establish a peaceful and stable future for all people.

Rev. Pillay is visiting Palestine and Israel this week, sharing in the life and ministry of member churches in the region. “As a worldwide fellowship of churches, we will continue to accompany the churches and the people in Palestine and Israel on their journey with prayer, action and hope for a better future,” Rev. Pillay said.

To support Act for Peace’s work in Gaza visit actforpeace.org.au

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Contact:

Kathy Arbuckle, Head of Marketing & Communications
E: karbuckle@actforpeace.org.au M: 0427 941 120

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