

Church leaders in Holy Land call for de-escalation, respect for human rights

by [World Council of Churches](#)

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(Photo by Albin Hillert/WCC)

Following an attack by the militant group Hamas on Israel on Saturday and Israel's military retaliation, church leaders in the Holy Land are raising their voices in unity to call for a cessation of all violent and military activities that bring harm to both Palestinian and Israeli civilians.

“The Holy Land, a place sacred to countless millions around the world, is currently mired in violence and suffering due to the prolonged political conflict and the lamentable absence of justice and respect for human rights,” reads [a statement](#) from the patriarchs and heads of churches in Jerusalem, released Sunday.

The statement unequivocally condemns any acts that target civilians, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, or faith.

“It is our fervent hope and prayer that all parties involved will heed this call for an immediate cessation of violence,” the statement reads. “We implore political leaders and authorities to engage in sincere dialogue, seeking lasting solutions that promote

justice, peace, and reconciliation for the people of this land, who have endured the burdens of conflict for far too long.”

In a [separate statement](#), released Saturday, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem expressed deep concern about the cycle of violence.

“The operation launched from Gaza and the reaction of the Israeli Army are bringing us back to the worst periods of our recent history,” the statement reads. “Unilateral declarations surrounding the status of religious sites and places of worship rattle religious sentiment and fuel even more hatred and extremism. It is therefore important to preserve the Status Quo in all the Holy Places in the Holy Land and in Jerusalem in particular.”

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land expressed shock and distress over the escalating violence in the Gaza Strip and its surrounding areas in [a statement](#) also released Saturday.

“As the language of ‘war’ is now being used to characterize this violence, it is important to remember that the warfare of today is not isolated,” reads the statement. “It is connected to a larger context and a longer history.” —World Council of Churches