



## **STATEMENT ON GAZA**

### **COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO**

Following is a statement issued by the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago regarding the violence and destruction inflicted on both Palestinians and Israelis as the open warfare in Gaza continues.

The Council is composed of chief leaders of the Greater Chicago area's Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, Protestant, Jewish and Islamic faith traditions. The churches, synagogues, mosques and inter-faith bodies represented around our table embrace nearly four million men, women and children. Our seminaries prepare clergy and lay teachers for service in the Greater Chicago area, and throughout the world. The Council embraces a broad diversity of theological, ideological and political orientations. It is a microcosm of American religion as it exists in a great city that lies in the American heartland.

As an interfaith organization representing religious leaders from many religious traditions that hold divergent social, economic and political views, the Council of Religious Leaders limits its public statements to those that represent a broad consensus of its members. Drawing on the core teachings of our religious traditions, the Council urges that the continuing violence between Israel and Gaza come to an immediate end.

We join in prayer for the peace and justice which God promises and to which our faiths bear witness, and we ask others to join with us.

As we pray, we urge all parties in the conflict to:

- Honor the religiously grounded principle that every precaution be made to protect the life and well being of civilian non-combatants.

- Honor the religiously grounded principle that all necessary humanitarian aid be provided, acknowledging that our religious traditions require attention and aid especially to those who are vulnerable, in need, and are the victims of suffering not of their own making.
- Honor the religiously grounded principle that peacemaking built upon justice must always take precedence over war and violence, leading to the immediate cessation of hostilities and to negotiations for a just and lasting peace in the region.

We further urge that, as a means of achieving the objectives listed above, recognized international observers and media be allowed to monitor and report on the activities of the conflict, the steps being taken to minister to the needs of victims, and the initiatives being taken to achieve an end to the conflict in both near and long term.

We also, out of our shared religious commitment to conversation and dialogue as instruments to advance justice and peace, appeal to the United States government to take a leading and credible role in achieving the cessation of violence and the establishment of a long term peace

And finally, as we address violence and destruction in Israel and Gaza, we are always conscious of the violence and offensive actions committed in our own community, especially the desecration of houses of worship and other religious institutions, such as the recent desecration of synagogues and other Jewish facilities. Such acts violate the very basis of our life together. We would make special note that the members of our Islamic community have stated repeatedly and without equivocation that they join in the denunciation of these desecrations.

All members of the Council stand united, sharing the pain and loss of both Israeli and Palestinian lives in a struggle which must come to a peaceful and just end.

January 19, 2009