October 11, 2023

WSCF condemns violence and calls for immediate cessation of war and hostility and for peace with justice in Palestine and Israel

In light of the recent developments in the occupied territory of Palestine, marked by violence against civilians by an armed group that breached the fence that separated the Gaza of southern Israel and the declaration of a "State of War" by Israel that has escalated the violence, the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) issues this public statement.

The escalation of violence, in addition to the imminent danger of a prolonged state of war, is a matter of grave concern to the WSCF. It has resulted in untold suffering for innocent civilians in the region, with a death toll numbering in the thousands.

We urgently call for respect for human rights and adherence to international law. It is imperative that violations of these principles cease immediately, and that all parties earnestly seek a peaceful and equitable resolution to the escalation.

The WSCF calls upon Israel to end the systemic violence against the population of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and to respect the UN resolutions regarding the end of the occupation, the illegal settlements, and the annexation strategy on Palestinian land.

While WSCF condemns all forms of violence, we also condemn the misuse of terminology and the dissemination of information that aims to undermine and jeopardize the historical struggle of the Palestinian people for peace, self-determination, justice, and dignity.

WSCF emphasizes that the current situation is not a conflict between equitable forces. The crime of apartheid being perpetrated against Palestinians results in a constant infringement upon the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and access to fundamental rights.

WSCF condemns Israel's total siege on the Gaza Strip, as imposed by the Israeli Government. This deprives over 2 million civilians of essential goods for survival, including food, electricity, water, and supplies, and is a violation of international law. This has been recently remarked upon by the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations. The violation of humanitarian law against Gaza's civilian population is systemic and must be addressed and brought to light by the international community and the media.

"Gaza has been under blockade for over 16 years, and even when people in Gaza tried to march, they did the Great March of Return in 2018, and they were shot and killed. Only this year (2023), 200 Palestinians were killed," said Yasmina Rishmawi, a member of the WSCF Executive Committee.

WSCF calls on the international community and competent organizations to conduct proper research into the latest developments. We also urge media outlets to report on the current

situation from a human rights perspective and in accordance with international law and the relevant UN resolutions. Western media often fails to provide the historical and current context of the situation in Gaza, which is considered the world's largest open-air prison due to its geographical, economic, and political blockade.

WSCF appeals to Christians around the world to pray for the civilian population that has endured the tragedies of apartheid and war, including Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Yasmina stated, *"We must recognize that peace cannot be achieved without justice. We need transformative prayer that acknowledges justice as the sole path to peace and true reconciliation."*

WSCF also highlights the importance of supporting the call from our sisters and brothers in the occupied territory and supporting the Kairos Document, written by churches and ecumenical organizations in the Holy Land.

As a global community, the WSCF believes in the power of compassion, action, and prayer. We join our voices with numerous organizations and ecumenical partners in advocating for peace and justice in the region. During our 37th General Assembly, we reaffirmed our WSCF policy paper on Solidarity with the Palestinian People, calling for an end to violence and hostility and denouncing the crime of apartheid against the population of the Palestinian occupied territory.

Our thoughts and prayers are with all those affected by the violence, and we remain steadfast in our commitment to solidarity and peace with justice in the region.

"The Fruit of Justice will be Peace"
(Isaiah 32:17)

Marcelo Leites
General Secretary
World Student Christian Federation

Geevarghese Coorilos
Chairperson
World Student Christian Federation

About the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF):
WSCF is ecumenical – welcoming people from all Christian traditions and encouraging dialogue between students of different traditions. WSCF has members from Protestant, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions and from other faiths.
As a federation of student movements, the WSCF empowers and connects responsible young leaders around the world in their path to changing tomorrow. We encourage a culture of democracy to mobilize youth to become proactive in society, promoting positive change through dialogue and action between different traditions and cultures.