

Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

(Isaiah 58:7)

For the past 20 months, we have been enduring an unbearable period—a time of war and tremendous loss of life, with countless casualties and injuries, including many soldiers and civilians. Fifty-five hostages remain held in dire conditions by Hamas. Israeli society remains deeply traumatized by the massacre of October 7 and yearns for the return of the hostages and an end to the war.

As a result of the ongoing war, severe humanitarian conditions have persisted in the Gaza Strip, affecting both its residents and the hostages, with growing concerns of acute hunger. The war continues to claim the lives of many innocent Palestinian civilians, including numerous children.

Horribly, there are members of the Israeli government and other public figures who have expressed support for the killing of innocent people in Gaza, including children. These statements are inhumane, immoral, and fundamentally incompatible with Jewish values, which teach us that all human beings are created in the image of God – “So God created human beings in God's image; in the image of God, God created them; male and female God created them.” (Genesis 1:27).

While we must address the needs of the many Israeli citizens suffering as a result of the war – the hundreds of thousands displaced from their homes, the bereaved families, the wounded, and the urgent need to return the hostages – we must not ignore the suffering of innocent civilians in Gaza who are not involved in the fighting. In the face of Hamas's cruelty and inhumanity, and alongside our unequivocal demand for the immediate release of the hostages, with the demand that they be treated humanely until then, we must uphold our own humanity, reject racism and hatred, and work toward ending the war and halting the bloodshed.

International law places the responsibility on the party with effective control over a conflict zone to ensure the needs of the local population are met. It is essential that the Jewish and democratic State of Israel uphold this duty for as long as the IDF maintains effective control of the area—even in these difficult times of warfare.

We call upon the Government of Israel to redouble its efforts to secure the release of the hostages, while also minimizing harm to innocent civilians and doing everything possible to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. This includes ensuring sufficient and appropriate aid enters Gaza and that steps are taken to guarantee that the aid reaches its intended recipients rather than falling into the hands of terrorist groups.

We will continue to pray for the safety and swift return of the hostages, for the safe return of all our soldiers, for the end of the war, and for days of peace.