

MISSION MOMENT: CALL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE

October 7, 2024, marked one year since the escalation in violence in the Middle East, in which 1200 Israeli citizens were killed by Hamas and more than 200 Israelis were taken hostage, and one year since Israel's ensuing response: bombardment in Gaza and the West Bank, and the spread of the war in the Middle East. As of this writing, nearly 45,000 Palestinians have been killed, and hundreds of thousands more have been displaced – many of them multiple times – from their homes to other parts of Gaza, and made refugees in neighboring countries.

Week of Compassion has been responding, on behalf of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), supporting initiatives to bring relief in impacted communities and in regions bearing the influx of refugees and displaced persons. Week of Compassion is working with partners in Gaza and the surrounding areas – the West Bank, Jordan, and Lebanon – to support their responses. Widespread destruction has left almost the entire population of Gaza without access to clean drinking water or sufficient food; an estimated 2.2 million people are at risk of famine.

The Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR) of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) – a Disciples partner that Week of Compassion has supported through Global Ministries and ACT Alliance – partnered with local churches in the north of Gaza to establish a food distribution program that now extends to southern Gaza, reaching the most vulnerable, especially the elderly, ill, and women and children.

As the conflict has intensified in Lebanon, more than one million people have been displaced, and 4000 residential buildings destroyed, with 20,000 showing significant damage. ACT Alliance members, including DSPR and the MECC, have mobilized support for 150 newly opened shelters, including water and sanitation, food and medical parcels, mattresses and blankets, and basic shelter assistance.



Week of Compassion's response has supported DSPR's remarkable transformation of damaged spaces into functional health centers. In central and south Gaza, the DSPR clinic is one of only four serving the population, including primary health and dental care, medical lab and pharmacy services, mother/child health support, medicines and hygiene kits, alongside critical psychosocial and emotional care, reaching nearly 30,000 people.

Among the widespread damage, all twelve universities in Gaza have been destroyed, and all records are missing. Teachers, students, and staff have been displaced, injured, and killed, and more than 80% of school buildings directly hit or damaged. With Week of Compassion assistance, collaborating with the United Church of Christ through our shared Global Ministries, Dar al-Kalima University is providing educational services for displaced university students of Gaza, offering electronic courses to help them complete their studies and graduate.

Peter Makari, the Global Ministries Global Relations Minister for the Middle East and Europe, shared a recent note from partners at DSPR:

“We always need to be reminded that while we work to address the immediate needs and consequences, we must not lose sight of the root causes of this conflict. Whatever efforts we make, it is essential that we remain focused on the underlying issues that fuel this war and continue to call for justice, peace, and long-term solutions.”

Peter added, “The situation in Gaza is horrific, and our partners are doing heroic work there.”

Week of Compassion continues to tell of what we have HEARD AND SEEN, and to pursue the things that make for hope and peace – things that are true, honorable, and just. Week of Compassion joins Disciples and ecumenical partners to remain constant in prayer, faithful in response, committed to peace with justice, and ever-inspired by the colleagues, partners, and collaborators with whom we serve.