



STATEMENT BY THE GENERAL SYNODICAL COMMITTEE (GSC 2023) OF THE UNITING REFORMED CHURCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA ON THE WAR BETWEEN ISRAEL AND HAMAS

It is with pain and sadness that the GSC 2023 takes note of the huge loss of life (especially of women and children) in the Israel and Palestinian war and the total destruction of livelihoods on both sides, especially by the constant bombardment of Israel's weaponry.

The GSC 2023 wants to express its belief that the innocent blood in the streets of Gaza calls out for justice and righteousness.

Our church cries out in empathy, and unequivocally condemns the cruelty displayed on innocent civilians. The GSC 2023 calls on our members to show their love and support to the people in this conflict. The GSC 2023 is furthermore deeply concerned about Israel's decision to block entrances of humanitarian relief to Gaza.

We therefore call on our members to pray for a change of heart amongst the leaders on both sides so that reconciliation can take place.

In this regard we quote from Article 4 of our Confession of Belhar:

We believe

- that God has revealed himself as the one who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people;
- that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged;
- that God calls the church to follow him in this, for God brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry;
- that God frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind;
- that God supports the downtrodden, protects the stranger, helps orphans and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly;

- that for God pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows in their suffering;
- that God wishes to teach the church to do what is good and to seek the right
- that the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream;
- that the church as the possession of God must stand where the Lord stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others.

Consequently, the GSC 2023 makes the following calling:

- 1. All seven regional synods should regard Sunday, 3 December 2023 as a Sunday in Black and a day on which to pray that all conflicts and wars must end.**
- 2. Congregations are requested to wear black, and light a candle during this service.**

The GSC 2023 therefore pray for God's intervention in this conflict so that there can be peace for the people in Gaza and in Israel.

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