



**December 12, 2023**

Dear Mr. President,

We are a group of organizations representing thousands of American-Palestinian Christians and Muslims who are deeply concerned about the ongoing violence and humanitarian crisis in Gaza. We write to you as fellow believers in the Prince of Peace, who was born in Bethlehem, Palestine -a city where many of us were born- and where Jesus preached a message of love and justice for all people.

As the churches of Palestine had announced the cancellation of all festive Christmas celebrations and limiting them to masses and prayers, in an expression of unity with Gaza and rejection of the ongoing aggression against the Palestinian people in Gaza and the Israeli army and Settler's violence in the West Bank against the Palestinian civilians. The Christian American-Palestinian community in the United States will also celebrate Christmas this year by praying for peace and calling for an immediate ceasefire.

Based on our shared American values of freedom, liberty, equality, and the respect for human life we urge you to use your influence and authority to call for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire in Gaza, and to support a diplomatic solution that respects the rights and dignity of both Palestinians and Israelis. We believe that this is the only way to end the cycle of bloodshed and suffering, and to create the conditions for a lasting peace in the Holy Land. Creating peace should start with ceasing fire and lifting the Gaza blockade, ending the decades old Israeli Occupation, and recognizing the Palestinian people's right to self determination and independence in their own sovereign state.

As we celebrate Christmas, we remember the words of the angels who announced the birth of Jesus: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." (Luke 2:14) We pray that you will heed this message and act with courage and compassion to save lives and promote peace in Gaza.

It's very difficult for us Christian Palestinians or for any human of any faith to have any festive celebration while watching the ongoing death in Gaza. Since the escalation of hostilities on October 7<sup>th</sup> more than 18,000 Palestinians have been killed, with 70% of them being women and children, among them 19 Christian Palestinians were killed by an Israeli airstrike while at church. Almost 50,000 have been injured with thousands still buried under the rubble. More than 1.8 million people have been displaced from their homes, and many are living in overcrowded shelters with limited or no access to water, food, health care, electricity, gas, and sanitation. The infrastructure of Gaza has been severely damaged by Israeli airstrikes, affecting electricity, water, sewage, hospitals, churches, mosques, schools, and communication networks. Also, the blockade imposed by Israel has been exacerbating the humanitarian situation,

restricting the movement of people and goods, and preventing the delivery of essential supplies and humanitarian aid.

We are heartbroken by the suffering of our Palestinian families in Gaza, as well as by the loss of life and injury among all civilians. We affirm that all human beings are created in the image of God and deserve to live in dignity, security, and freedom. We call on you to recognize the humanity and rights of both Palestinians and Israelis, and to work for a just and lasting resolution of this conflict.

Sincerely,

Beit Sahour USA

American Federation of Ramallah, Palestine

Bethlehem Association