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STATEMENT

The Human Cost of War: A Moral Call to Action

Most Reverend John C. Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe,
Releases Statement Regarding the Ongoing Humanitarian Crisis and Recent Events in Gaza

ALBUQUERQUE – Tuesday, May 27, 2025—IMMEDIATE RELEASE— A statement from Most Reverend John C. Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe, on the ongoing humanitarian crisis and recent events in Gaza.

Since the first attack on Israel by Hamas on October 7, 2023, the situation has reached tragic levels beyond anyone's worst fears. The horrific massacre of innocent Israelis and the subsequent response from Israel has resulted in unimaginable loss of life and human suffering. In Gaza, the conflict has resulted in the loss of more than 52,000 lives, with 118,000 injured and still hostages who have not been returned home. Just since this past March, since Israel ended a cease-fire, the Gaza Health Ministry reports that 3,785 people have been killed, including nine of ten children of a Palestinian doctor. According to the Red Cross, 470,000 people are facing starvation. Aid has been unable to enter Gaza for eleven weeks. These are more than just numbers on a page; these numbers represent families torn apart, children left without their parents, and parents going to mourn their children. In the face of such immense human anguish, the Catholic community and all people of goodwill are called to respond with compassion and action.

Speaking from our Catholic faith and tradition, Jesus Christ mandates us to advocate for peace and justice. The ongoing violence in Gaza stresses the urgent need for dialogue and reconciliation. Innocent lives are being lost, children are suffering in the midst of chaos, and countless families have been displaced and are living in fear and uncertainty. We must remember that peace cannot be achieved through violence; it can only flourish through understanding and respect for one another's dignity and worth.

On May 8, 2009, Pope Benedict XVI visited the Holy City. In an in-flight interview with Fr. Federico Lombardi, SJ, he said, "As believers, we are convinced that prayer is a real force: it opens up the world to God. We are convinced that God can act in history." We encourage all the faithful to join in prayer for an immediate cease-fire in Gaza, the release of the hostages, and the immediate and comprehensive delivery of humanitarian aid. The targeting of civilians, including innocent children, the bombing of hospitals and schools, and the blocking of food, water, and medicine to Palestinians is unconscionable and inexcusable.

As we anticipate the great feast of Pentecost, I pray that the Holy Spirit will touch the hearts of world leaders and bring about swift and lasting peace in the Holy Land. I call attention to the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." October 7, 2023, was a day of unspeakable darkness and hate. The last 20 months in Gaza have been more of the same. How many more innocent people must die, how many children must be orphaned, and how many tears must be shed before the leaders of Hamas and Israel learn that light and love are the only weapons that will bring lasting peace to the land we call holy? How long, O Lord? How long?

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