



World Council of Churches  
Conseil œcuménique des Eglises  
Consejo Mundial de Iglesias  
Ökumenischer Rat der Kirchen  
General Secretariat

Postal address: P.O. Box 2100  
CH-1211 Geneva 2  
Switzerland  
Visiting address: 150 route de Ferney  
Phone: (+41-22) 791 61 11  
Fax: (+41-22) 791 03 61  
General e-mail: [infowcc@wcc-coe.org](mailto:infowcc@wcc-coe.org)  
Website: [www.wcc-coe.org](http://www.wcc-coe.org)

Direct dial: (+41-22) 791 6285  
Direct e-mail: [uz@wcc-coe.org](mailto:uz@wcc-coe.org)  
Direct fax: (+41-22) 791 6535

To:  
WCC Member Churches  
ACT Members

Geneva, 22 January 2008

**Re: Alarming humanitarian situation in Gaza**

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Greetings to you in Christ and as fellow disciples of the Prince of Peace.

Like many of you, we are receiving alarming reports from Gaza, where people have been suffering for a long time from isolation, siege and collective punishment by the government of Israel.

An alarming new appeal by the heads of churches in Jerusalem notes that:

*"...one and a half million people are imprisoned and without proper food or medicine. 800,000 without electricity supply; this is illegal collective punishment, an immoral act in violation of International Law. This cannot be tolerated any further. The siege over Gaza should end now."*

Mr. Constantine Dabbagh, the executive director of the Near East Council of Churches based in Gaza, reports that bakeries that used to distribute bread regularly are now unable to do so because of fuel shortages, with long queues of people hoping to get their daily staple. With electricity shortages, the much-needed refrigerators used in the three primary health clinics of the Gaza Strip are in jeopardy. This also applies to hospitals and other health facilities across Gaza.

Dr. Bernard Sabella, the executive secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches' Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees writes that political talks between Palestinians and Israel over the Gaza Strip situation have become an urgent necessity and are demanded by all Palestinians.

For so long, we have heard from many churches and ecumenical partners that they feel helpless when confronted with the situation in Gaza. But we should always remember that in Amman, last June, we promised the churches in the Middle East, and particularly in Israel/Palestine, that together “we will act and pray and speak and work and risk reputations and lives to build with them bridges for an enduring peace among the peoples of this tortured and beautiful place”.

In response to the many calls for help, I urge you to:

Pray for an end of the suffering in Gaza.

Speak out for the people of Gaza calling for an end to the siege, an end to their collective punishments and a negotiated ceasefire. Address your parishes, the public, your governments and the embassies of governments most directly involved in the Middle East – the United States, Israel, the European Union and Russia. Attached you will find a model letter that could be used by individual people of faith to address their representatives in parliaments and governments.

Help and manifest your solidarity with the churches in Palestine. Gaza lives under collective punishment, incursions and siege. Churches and related agencies are serving some of the needs. They need our support, and Action by Churches Together is co-ordinating appeals for humanitarian aid.

Local churches in Jerusalem will feel strengthened and less abandoned when they see help coming from churches abroad. They will also greatly appreciate messages of support coming from sister churches from all over the world. I strongly encourage you to manifest your solidarity by writing directly to them.

The World Council of Churches has always held that justice among the states and peoples of the Middle East must be based on the international rule of law and on rigorous implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions pertaining to the conflicts. May we continue to stand together, praying for peace with justice to embrace all concerned. As we pray, so may we believe. And so, too, be moved to action.

Yours in Christ,



Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia  
General Secretary

## SAMPLE LETTER TO YOUR GOVERNMENT OR EMBASSY

[Insert name and address of one of the following:

- *Your minister of foreign affairs*
- *Your representative in parliament*
- *Members of the Mid-East Quartet:*
  - *Ambassadors of the United States and of Russia in your country*
  - *H.E. Mr Javier Solana*  
*High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy,*  
*Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union*  
*The Council of the European Union*  
*Rue de la Loi 17*  
*1048 Brussels*  
*Fax +32 2 281 56 94*  
[cristina.gallach@consilium.europa.eu](mailto:cristina.gallach@consilium.europa.eu)

- *H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-Moon*  
*Secretary-General*  
*United Nations*  
*1 UN Plaza*  
*New York, NY 10017*

Dear (official title)

I write to you from the context of my faith with regard to the tragic situation we see before us in the news regarding the situation in Gaza. I stand in solidarity with those who are suffering, and join them in their cries for justice.

With this letter, I ask that you use the weight of your office as a public official to be in contact with public officials of the state of Israel. Ask that they put an end to the siege of Gaza and to the repetitive collective punishments of its people. Ask them to negotiate a ceasefire for Gaza as an essential step forward in the current negotiations on Israeli-Palestinian peace.

In 1948, many nations around the world signed the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights agreeing to avoid such non-humanitarian treatment of others. It is particularly the innocent who are suffering. The siege has increased violent attacks against civilians on both sides. It has cut the people of Gaza off from adequate supplies of food, medicine, electricity and fuel, and crippled essential health and sanitation services in one of the most densely populated places on earth.

I ask that you advocate for the lifting of the siege of Gaza, an end to collective punishment and the negotiation of a ceasefire for the sake of the people of Gaza and their neighbors.

In Faith,