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## STATEMENT ON THE CRISIS IN GAZA, THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES, AND ISRAEL

Adopted by the LWF Council on 18 June 2024

*The Lutheran World Federation Council, meeting under the theme 'Abound in Hope – Rom 15:13' issues the following statement:*

The Council is horrified about the ongoing war which is destroying the dignity, lives, and livelihoods of the people living in Palestine and Israel especially those living in Gaza. The violence has been escalated by the brutal killing and hostage-taking by Hamas, by Israel's war on Gaza, which have brutally killed tens of thousands of people, and by the holding of countless Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons without charge. All of this has further deepened the crises in the region. Consistent with the LWF longstanding witness, the Council condemns the violations of International Humanitarian Law, human rights and human dignity, including sexual and gender-based violence the destruction of civilian infrastructure including homes, hospitals, schools, and religious sites.

The Council expresses sympathy and prays for the individuals, families and communities who have lost loved ones, suffered injuries, have been displaced from their homes and who are affected in other ways by the ongoing war. The Council notes with deep concern the huge and disproportionate impact this crisis continues to have on children. The Council further expresses its solidarity with Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land whose situation, presence and access to their holy sites has significantly deteriorated and is at permanent risk.

The Council reaffirms the statement of the LWF Thirteenth Assembly, noting the appeal of the church leaders in Jerusalem who expressed the "growing fear that the already diminished Christian presence could disappear altogether from the Holy Land." The war is affecting all parts of the land including the West Bank and Jerusalem where the threat and reality of settler violence is creating insecurity and fear.

The LWF is also deeply concerned that the war in Gaza has led to increased polarization across the world, rekindling hate against Muslim, Jewish, Palestinian and Israeli people, leading to instances of violence against individuals and communities.

The Council is grateful to and reaffirms its strong support to and solidarity with the LWF member church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and in the Holy Land in its ministry, witness and service during these challenging times and recognizes its continuous work and outspokenness on the war. Similarly, the Council also commends the LWF World Service program in Jerusalem for exemplary work, particularly the provision of specialized healthcare to the Palestinian people through the Augusta Victoria Hospital. The Council also expresses its support and appreciation to other member churches who have called for a ceasefire, humanitarian aid and the release of all hostages and prisoners.

The Council believes that there is hope for an end to the war and therefore calls on:

- The warring parties to agree on an immediate ceasefire and cessation of all hostilities to pave way for unimpeded humanitarian access and protection of the affected people and aid workers.
- Hamas to immediately release all hostages it is holding.
- Israel to immediately withdraw its forces from Gaza, and to release all the prisoners it is holding without charge.
- Israel to guarantee access to Jerusalem for patients from Gaza and the West Bank seeking medical services and for staff working at the Augusta Victoria Hospital and other hospitals in Jerusalem.
- The warring parties in particular, and other national, regional and international actors to respect International Humanitarian Law and particularly ensure the safety, dignity and human rights of the affected populations.
- The international community to support the rebuilding of Gaza and its social infrastructure.
- Israel to prosecute and prevent settler violence in Jerusalem and Occupied Palestinian Territories.
- The international community to redouble its efforts toward finding a lasting solution to the crisis in Israel/Palestine. We renew our call for an end to the occupation and for the two-state solution as has been envisaged and agreed upon by the Oslo Accords and numerous UN resolutions.
- The LWF and its member churches to address the scourge of anti-Muslim, anti-Jewish, anti-Palestinian and anti-Israeli hate in church and society.