



ELCA E-ADVOCACY NETWORK
MIDDLE EAST/ INTERNATIONAL
ACTION ALERT

Middle East Network Newsletter

January 30, 2009

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Bishops' Academy in the Holy Land January 2009

During January, 44 bishops from the United States and Canada visited sacred sites and met with religious, political, and community leaders in Israel and the West Bank. Their visit centered on supporting the mission and ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land ([ELCJHL](#)), learning about daily life for Israelis and Palestinians, and advocating for peace and justice for all in the region.

To view reports, photos, video clips, and blogs by individual bishops, please [click here](#).

The Gaza Crisis

ELCA Disaster Response

Just three weeks after the latest round of violence erupted between the military forces of Israel and Hamas militants, the long-term effects of trauma experienced by the 1.5 million people in Gaza are beginning to be seen. Medical workers report that people intuitively still look into the sky for planes every time they leave their homes, and on the street people are scared by loud voices or the sudden moves of others.

"Everybody is traumatized in one way or another," says Dr. Suhail Madbak, Dean of the medical school at Al Azhar University in Gaza.

From contributions sent to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's International Disaster Response, a \$50,000 contribution was made in early January to Action by Churches Together (ACT), a global alliance of churches and related agencies, including the ELCA, working to save lives and support communities in emergencies worldwide. ACT members have transported eight trucks of aid into Gaza over the past two weeks, even while the fighting was ongoing. Aid has included food, milk, blankets and medical supplies for Gaza clinics, the Al Ahli Arab Hospital, and displaced people living in camps and at UN Relief and Works Agency locations. Assessments are underway to plan for long-term recovery for the individuals and communities within Gaza. Further details are available at <http://www.act-intl.org/> (see Latest News and Updates on the right side).

The ELCA has established a designated account to receive contributions for aid to the people of Gaza. 100% of International Disaster Response dollars contribute to immediate needs



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and help the most vulnerable to rebuild their lives. Contributions can be sent by mail, phone or online; for additional information on ways to give, please visit www.elca.org/giving Web site. To learn more about ELCA Disaster Response at work, visit www.elca.org/disaster Web site.

Churches for Middle East Peace

A group of House members organized a letter to Secretary of State Clinton expressing "deep concern for the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and to request immediate action by the United States to address this crisis." CMEP sent an action alert requesting e-mails to Representatives urging them to sign on. As of the January 27 deadline, 64 Representatives had joined the effort. For a list of signatories and to send a thank you to your Representative for signing, go to the [CMEP](http://www.cmepep.org) Web site.

CMEP joined with seven Jewish, Arab-American and religious-based organizations to urge President Obama to make a "fresh start" in U.S. efforts to resolve the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. The letter stated that the groups "join in this time of crisis because we believe that, by working together, we can make the most effective contribution to ending the violence and delivering peace and security to the peoples of the Middle East."

NOTE: The World Council of Churches reports ways that Christians around the globe are responding to this crisis; [click here](#) to view link. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the occupied Palestinian territories provides informational updates at: <http://www.ochaopt.org/gazacrisis/> Web site.

Jewish, Christian & Muslim Leaders Support President Obama's Making Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace an Immediate, High Priority

In a letter faxed to the White House on January 27, Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders of the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East (NILI) pledged support for President Obama's "commitment to make Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace a high priority from the start of his Presidency." They commended him "for calling Arab and Israeli leaders on his first day in office and for appointing George Mitchell as special Middle East envoy, especially since NILI has called repeatedly for a special envoy." ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson was among the signatories. Visit www.nili-mideastpeace.org to view the letter and the list of signers.

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