

#11 Calling for an End to Genocide and for Lasting Peace in Gaza

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RESOLVED, That the 193rd Convention of the Diocese of Vermont, meeting October 30, 2025, give thanks for the ceasefire of October 9, 2025, between Palestinian forces in Gaza and the government of Israel, and pray that, at long last, the leadership of the Palestinians and that of the State of Israel may find ways to continue a process that will lead to a just and lasting peace for both Palestinians and Israelis; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Convention deplore the massive and disproportionate destruction of innocent lives, livelihoods, infrastructure and property inflicted on the Palestinian people of Gaza in the course of a two-year war initiated by a Hamas massacre in Israel of approximately 1,200 innocent Israelis on October 7, 2023; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Convention acknowledge the [report issued September 16, 2025](#), by a group commissioned by the UN Human Rights Council in 2021, which concluded after extensive legal investigations that the government of the State of Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, as defined by the [1948 UN Genocide Convention](#); and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Convention express its gratitude to Vermont's United States Senators Bernie Sanders and Peter Welch and to Representative Becca Balint for [their statements of September 17, 2025](#), concurring with the conclusion that the Israeli government is committing genocide against the Palestinian people of Gaza; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Convention commend the Bishops and Deputies of the 81st General Convention of The Episcopal Church, meeting in June 2024, for their careful deliberation and adoption of resolutions that:

- condemned and lamented the Hamas-led attack on Israel in 2023 and “the scale and scope of the Israeli government’s ensuing military retaliation in Gaza,” and called for a cease-fire and the building of a lasting peace ([D007, Peace Through Equal Rights in Israel/Palestine](#));
- supported “enforcement of policies that ensure U.S. government military assistance to the State of Israel be conditioned on adherence to international humanitarian law and U.S. statutes” ([D012, Conditioning US Military Assistance to Israel on Human Rights and a Negotiated Peace](#));
- recognized “the moral and legal obligations of the United States to the people of Gaza, given the role of the United States in providing military aid and diplomatic support for the war,” and called upon the United States government “to provide, as part of a process for creating a negotiated and sustainable peace, significant and necessary aid for the long-term rebuilding of Gaza ([D009, Swords Into Plowshares: U.S. Accountability and Responsibility in Rebuilding Gaza](#)):

and be it further

RESOLVED, That the 193rd Convention reject the false narrative that any criticism of the policies of the State of Israel is inherently antisemitic and oppose the efforts of U.S. federal and state governments to limit free speech based on a questionable definition of antisemitism; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Convention acknowledge the obligation of the State of Israel to maintain the ceasefire, end attacks on Palestinians, end military occupation, and expedite the entry of critical aid into Gaza; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Convention request the Presiding Bishop and House of Bishops to join our denominational partners in naming the ongoing genocide of the Palestinian peoples by the State of Israel with the complicity of the United States of America; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Convention request that the Convention Secretary send this resolution to the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, Vermont's congressional delegation, the Governor of Vermont, the Secretary of State of Vermont and the Attorney General of Vermont to request support in the enforcement of international laws and the [Leahy Laws](#); and be it further

RESOLVED, That the 193rd Convention share this resolution, pray, and speak within our congregations and communities about the genocide in Gaza and the need for responsible and continued commitments to help create a lasting peace in Palestine and Israel and rebuild Gaza.

EXPLANATION

Note to Delegates: The sponsors submitted the original resolution, "Calling for an End to Genocide in Gaza," on September 16, 2025, prior to the submission deadline of September 19. Since then, circumstances changed, and continue to change, rapidly. The Resolutions Committee wanted to make the resolution as timely and meaningful as possible so has suggested a number of changes. The resolution offered above, with some minor word changes, was submitted to the Pre-Convention Hearing on October 16, 2025, without an explanation.

What follows is some explanatory and resource material to expand on the initial five RESOLVED sections (which were added to the original prior to the October 16 Pre-Convention Hearing), followed by a Background section submitted by the resolution's sponsors in mid-September.

Current Cease Fire (First Resolve)

On October 9, 2025, the State of Israel and the leadership of Palestinian forces in Gaza agreed to a twenty-point peace plan developed primarily by the US Government, and the first phase, a ceasefire went into effect that day. The ceasefire remains extremely fragile, with both sides claiming violations by the other. A "[Guide to the Gaza Peace Deal](#)" by the Council on Foreign Relations is updated regularly on its website.

See also "[Thou Shalt Not Kill](#)" by Jonathan Kuttab, Executive Director of FOSNA (Friends of Sabeel North America) a nonprofit Christian ecumenical organization seeking justice and peace in the Holy Land through education, advocacy and nonviolent action.

Devastation of Life and Property in Gaza (Second Resolve)

On October 7, 2023, Hamas crossed the Gaza border into Israel, massacred innocent civilians, and took over 200 hostages back to Gaza. Release of the hostages has taken place in increments since the start of the war, and the peace plan negotiated not only for the release of the last hostages (living and those whose bodies remained in Gaza), but also for the release of over 2,000 of the Palestinians held in Israeli prisons, many without formal charges.

Much of Gaza has been obliterated by the Israel Defense Force, and the population forced to flee their homes, some multiple times, and the blockade of humanitarian assistance has led to

widespread starvation, The Health Ministry in Gaza has placed the death toll at nearly 70,000, over 20,000 of them children, and the number of wounded nearly 170,000, many of them children. See:

- [“These numbers show how 2 years of war have devastated Palestinian lives in Gaza,”](#) October 7, 2025, NPR.
- [“The Human Toll of the Gaza War: Direct and Indirect Death from 7 October 2023 to 3 October 2025,”](#) a paper by Neta Crawford of the Watson Center of International and Public Affairs at Brown University.
- [“Why Are People Starving in Gaza? The Logistics of Humanitarian Aid,”](#) The World Food Program, USA, October 25, 2025.

Declaration of Genocide (Third Resolve)

A Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel (commissioned by the UN Human Rights Council in 2021) issued its report, [Legal analysis of the conduct of Israel in Gaza pursuant to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#), September 16, 2025. The Commission’s extensive investigation, which began well before the Hamas attack of October 7, 2023, did turn its focus to both the attack and Israel’s response. In concluding that, under the [UN Genocide Convention of 1948](#), Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, it quotes the Convention’s recognition that, “all States have a duty to assess whether a violation of the Genocide Convention has occurred or may occur and take steps to determine their own obligations in preventing and punishing such acts (p. 69).”

Statements by Vermont Congressional Delegation (Fourth Resolve)

Senators Bernie Sanders and Peter Welch and Representative Becca Balint all issued statements on September 17, 2025, concurring with the UN Commission report’s judgement that the situation in Gaza should be considered a genocide. See:

[“Vermont’s congressional delegation says Israel is committing genocide in Gaza,”](#) by Bob Kinzel, Vermont Public, September 18, 2025.

[“It Is Genocide,”](#) Bernie Sanders op-ed, September 17, 2025.

[“I believe Israel is committing Genocide in Gaza,”](#) by Representative Becca Balint, op-ed, September 17, 2025.

81st General Convention of The Episcopal Church (Fifth Resolve)

At its 2024 gathering in Louisville, KY, bishops and deputies adopted a number of resolutions addressing the situation in Palestine/Israel. Successive General Conventions had addressed the ongoing conflict, dating back many years. The exception at this convention was a greater level of agreement between bishops and deputies. Three of the resolutions are noted and linked in the Fifth Resolve.

The Leahy Laws (Ninth Resolve)

The Leahy Laws, or Leahy Amendments, are U.S. human rights laws that prohibit the U.S. Department of State and Department of Defense from providing military assistance to foreign security force units that engage in “gross violations of human rights” (GVHR). The laws are named after their principal sponsor, Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vermont). A [State Department fact sheet on the Leahy Laws](#) notes that, “The U.S. government considers torture, extrajudicial killing, enforced disappearance, and rape under color of law as GVHR when implementing the Leahy law. Incidents are examined on a fact-specific basis.”

The Diocese of Vermont, as far back as its 176th Annual Convention, on October 27, 2018, adopted Resolution #1 Application of the Leahy Laws to Israel:

RESOLVED, That the 176th Convention of the Diocese of Vermont request the Office of the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church and the Vermont congressional delegation to urge the United States Departments of State and Defense to apply the Leahy Laws to Israel. The Resolution and Explanation may be found in the [2018 Convention Journal](#), Minutes of Convention.

Background (submitted by the sponsors of the original resolution)

- On October 7, 2023, Hamas-led militants launched a series of deadly, coordinated attacks from the Gaza strip in southern Israel. The surprise assault killed approximately 1200 Israeli soldiers and civilians and resulted in Hamas’s capture of 250 Israeli hostages. Israel immediately declared war on Hamas and began a horrific bombing campaign against the entire population of Gaza.
- The October 7 attack by Hamas has been condemned as a violation of international law. Yet most of Israel’s assaults on Palestinians and other perceived enemies (including bombing hospitals and targeting medical and rescue staff; starving and cutting off utilities of entire populations; practicing apartheid; invading sovereign states) have also violated international law and been categorized as war crimes. The ongoing violence between Israel and Palestine did not begin on Oct 7, 2023.
- When asked to describe what the origin of their cause is all about, most Palestinians will cite the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, when Britain promised the still-small Zionist movement a “national home” in Palestine. Other Palestinians will go farther back in history to 1897 and the Basel conference, where Zionism was born.
- Palestinians describe their origins this way because they have lived the history of their dispossession every day since Britain conquered Palestine in 1917. They can never forget the original flagrant injustice of an imperial power promising their land and country to another people. The Palestinians always ask: Why should we pay for what the Europeans did to the Jews?
- During the creation of Israel in 1948, over 750,000 Palestinians fled Zionist forces or were forced to leave. The Zionist forces committed 33 massacres and 531 Palestinian villages were destroyed. In violation of international law, the inhabitants were never allowed back to their land and homes. This dark period of Palestinian history is referred to as “the Nakba” (catastrophe in Arabic).
- People of Gaza have been confined to what has been defined as “the world’s largest open air concentration camp” since 2005, when Israel imposed a total blockade. Palestinians in Gaza depend entirely on Israel for food, medicine, electricity, water, and building materials.
- On January 22, 2009, Richard Falk, the UN Special Rapporteur, himself a Jew, declared that Israel’s actions against the besieged Gazans were reminiscent of “the worst kind of international memories of the Warsaw Ghetto,” a reference to the starvation and murder of Polish Jews by Nazis.
- Since Israel’s declaration of war on Hamas following the October 7th attack, international bodies and agencies — including the UN General Assembly, the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court, Genocide Watch, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch — have each conducted investigations and concluded that the actions of the State of Israel in Palestine constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and **GENOCIDE**.

- As of September 11, 2025, the Gaza Health Ministry reports that Israeli attacks have killed at least 64,718 Palestinians and injured more than 163,000 since October 7, 2023. U.N. agencies and independent experts consider the ministry's figures to be the most reliable available, though the Israeli government has disputed them. It is estimated that about 44% of the fatalities are children.
- More than 200 journalists and media workers have been killed in targeted attacks by the Israeli Defense Force, making it the deadliest ever conflict for journalists.
- Medical providers in Gaza have reported that there is a pattern of children having been killed by single gunshot wounds to the head or torso, indicating targeted killing. Medical aid and supplies have been blocked from entering Gaza by the Israeli military. Over 1,000 medical workers have been killed by Israeli forces and hospitals, schools, universities, mosques have been destroyed by Israeli bombs, all supplied by the US Government.
- Since March 2, 2025, the State of Israel has blocked aid supplies including food, fuel, water, and medicine from entering Gaza. The Israeli defense minister, Israel Katz, said, "Israel's policy is clear: no humanitarian aid will enter Gaza". In August 2025, the UN declared that a man-made famine is occurring in Gaza.
- The U.S. federal government has used taxpayer dollars to give the State of Israel approximately \$34 billion in military weapons, arms, and other financial support between October 2023 and March 2025. At least 69% of Israel's arms imports come from the U.S., and U.S.-made military vehicles and weapons have been identified as being used to conduct acts of **GENOCIDE**.
- The U.S. Government has violated the federal [Leahy Laws](#) which prohibits the U.S. Government "from using funds for assistance to units of foreign security forces where there is credible information implicating that unit in the commission of gross violations of human rights (GVHR)."
- The U.S. government has disregarded the International Criminal Court's arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, and instead welcomed Netanyahu as a guest to the White House and Congress.
- U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu have plans underway to relocate Palestinians in Gaza to other countries, permanently displacing them, and taking their homeland to use as a real estate project.
- The right to free speech as protected by the U.S. Constitution has been violated through arrests, imprisonment, deportation, and violent attacks by law enforcement on pro-Palestinian activists in the U.S.
- The silence of the Episcopal church in the face of an ongoing **GENOCIDE** is sinful. The silence is a blatant abdication of the church's baptismal vows to respect the rights and dignity of all human beings.
- In an open letter to the Presiding Bishop and all Bishops of the Episcopal church, members of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship Palestine Justice Network convey their anger and disappointment over church leaders not speaking out and taking action to stop the ongoing **GENOCIDE** in Gaza:

As you prepare to gather in the Dominican Republic on September 9, the Episcopal Peace Fellowship Palestine Justice Network submits this Open Letter to stress the pressing moral issue facing the world today: the ongoing horror in Gaza. We note with deep concern the rising distress and anger among many in our Church around the failure of our leaders to name the genocide that unfolds before our eyes every day.

We bring to your attention the statements naming genocide that have been issued this summer by our denominational partners and other religious voices: United Church of Christ, Evangelical Lutheran Church, International Society of Friends, Presbyterian Church USA, United Methodist Church, Unitarian Universalists. Standing together as the Body of Christ will add weight to our voices by naming the genocide and demanding an immediate end to the destruction of Gaza and its people by Israel's military forces.

As individual citizens we are accountable for our government's continuing military aid to Israel, as well as ensuring impunity to Israel for its crimes against humanity. We must demand change. That demand is amplified when the churches speak with a single voice. The critical starting point for change is naming the genocide. We hope and pray that our Episcopal Church leaders will NAME THE GENOCIDE, out of respect for the dignity of every human being.