

## **Christians for Fair Witness on the Middle East Prays and Pleads for an End to Israeli/ Palestinian Violence**

June 26, 2014

(New York, NY June 26, 2014) On June 12 three Israeli teenagers were kidnaped while hitchhiking near the Gush Etzion settlement on the West Bank. Israel feared that the kidnaped teens would be taken to Gaza to meet the same fate of Gilad Shalit (the Israeli soldier held captive for five years by Hamas militants), or worse. Israel says it has proof that Hamas was behind the kidnaping, although the Palestinian leadership questioned what they called Israel's "absence of [such] proof."

After the kidnaping the Israeli Defense Forces began an extensive search operation to locate the teenagers, focusing on areas considered Hamas strongholds such as Hebron. In the course of this search, during which dozens of Palestinians hurled rocks and molotov cocktails at Israeli forces, five Palestinians, including a teenager, were killed and more than 300 people were arrested. Hundreds of Palestinian homes were invaded and searched, thousands of people lost their permits to travel to Israel for work. At the same time, many Palestinians have praised and even celebrated the kidnaping as the best hope for securing the release of Palestinians in Israeli jails.

At this point Christians for Fair Witness on the Middle East ("Fair Witness") says "enough." Far too much blood has been shed, far too much anger has been stoked, far too many lives have been wasted, far too much good will has been squandered.

Both Israel and Palestine are mourning their dead and missing children. These senseless tragedies will not end until the leadership of both of these people decide to be statesmen and leaders and say:

*enough, we have shed enough blood, we have wounded each other and ourselves enough. This is where it stops.*

"We beg you Messrs. Abbas and Netanyahu, to stop manufacturing excuses and get back to the negotiating table," says Rev. Dr. Bruce Chilton, Bernard Iddings Bell Professor of Religion at Bard College and Fair Witness Executive Committee member. "It is time for both sides of this conflict to concede that they each have historically legitimate but conflicting claims to the land and agree to share it by delineating a border, ending all claims, and allowing their children to live and grow in peace and prosperity."

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