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We strongly protest the bombing of Al Ahli Anglican Hospital, call for an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, and ask for prayers and solidarity for the peace and tranquility of the souls of the victims.

**I will listen to what God the Lord says;
he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants—
but let them not turn to folly. (Psalm 85:8, NIV)**

War has broken out in Palestine between Hamas and Israel. This is extremely lamentable.

The fighting between Israel and Palestine began when Israel was founded in Palestine. The world commiserated over the massacre of Jews by Nazi Germany during World War II, and in 1948 the UN recognised the founding of the State of Israel. The founding of Israel entailed the persecution and abuse of the indigenous Palestinian population through war, violence and legislation, creating huge numbers of internal refugees.

Since then, Israel has increased its oppression of the Palestinian internal refugees it created. Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and the high isolation wall surrounding the Gaza Strip are two examples of this. The residents of the Gaza Strip are confined by Israel within the isolation wall, limiting the delivery of food, fuel and medicine, and are unable to travel freely to and from the outside world. This is why the Segregation Wall is known as a "prison without a ceiling" or "the world's largest prison".

Now, Hamas has attacked Israel, and Israel has repeatedly bombed the Gaza Strip in response. The Al-Ahli Anglican Hospital has been bombed, resulting in many casualties. Al-Ahli Anglican Hospital is a hospital that the Anglican Church of Japan has also supported. The victims include women, children, the elderly, and other civilians who are not directly involved in the war.

Tens of thousands of casualties are expected if Israel invades the Gaza Strip. On 18 October, the UN held a security conference and called for the adoption of a resolution suspending the conflict in the Gaza Strip between Israel and Hamas and calling for humanitarian assistance for displaced persons in the Gaza Strip. However, it could not be adopted because the US, which supports Israel, exercised its veto. This is truly sad and unfortunate.

In 1995, 50 years after the war, the Anglican Church of Japan held a mission council meeting and confessed its past complicity in the war; the following year, at its 49th (regular) General Assembly, it passed its 'Declaration on the Anglican Church's War Responsibility'.

Since then, we have opposed all wars and conflicts in the world, and have called for peace. The victims of war are the weak and small, such as powerless women, children, the elderly and the disabled. Jesus said, "...whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40, NIV). Our position is clear. Where people are made small and weak, that is where Jesus is. That is where we are called to devote our hearts and minds.

We strongly protest against the bombing of Al-Ahli Hospital, we pray for the peace of the souls of the victims of the Israeli and Hamas bombing, we call for the immediate release of those being held hostage and for an immediate ceasefire. Let us stand in solidarity, oppose war and pray together for peace and justice.

20 October 2023.

Kenichi Muto, Primate, Nippon Sei Ko Kai

Eisho Uehara, Chairperson, Nippon Sei Ko Kai Justice and Peace Committee