

## **Evangelical Church in the Rhineland**

### **“With great concern for the people of the Middle East”**

July 25, 2025

<https://presse.ekir.de/presse/rheinische-kirche-in-grosser-sorge-um-die-menschen-im-nahen-osten-28156>

The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland (EKiR) is very concerned about the people of the Middle East. It is appalled by the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza. Together with the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and other churches, it supports the demand that sufficient food, clean drinking water and medical supplies reach the people in need quickly. The civilian population and medical facilities must not be the target of attacks. The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland is committed to upholding the dignity and human rights of all people in Israel and Palestine. It prays for all those who suffer from violence and for peace in the region.

The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland is critical of the statement of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Israel and Palestine. President Dr Thorsten Latzel [says]: “We support the WCC’s concern to contribute to a just peace based on human rights and international law. We welcome the WCC’s affirmation of its commitment to oppose all forms of antisemitism and racism. However, the WCC statement presents the situation in the Middle East in a reductive and undifferentiated way.” Thus, the statement conceals the massive human rights violations and war crimes that Hamas has committed and continues to commit. Israeli hostages are still in the hands of terrorists. The statement conceals the existential threat to which the State of Israel is exposed, which manifests itself in regular rocket fire and Iran’s nuclear weapons program, among other things. And it conceals the activities of autonomous Palestinian militias in the refugee camps, which also pose a threat to Palestinian civilians.

The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland recognizes the injustice, suffering and human rights violations caused by the continued occupation of the West Bank and the war in Gaza. However, it opposes the claim that this is due to a “system of apartheid” that Israel imposes on the Palestinians. The term “apartheid” does not do justice to the complexity of the situation in the West Bank and Gaza. The accusation of genocide is also untrue.

The EKiR joins the urgent appeal of aid organizations that humanitarian international law must be respected by both sides. The EKiR condemns the blockade of the import of relief supplies, attacks on civilian aid workers and journalists and the shelling of hospitals.

According to what is known from media reports, both the instrumentalization of the civilian population by Hamas and the way in which the Israeli army asserts its military superiority are to be criticized. President Dr. Thorsten Latzel [declares]: “There needs to be an end to violence, destruction and expulsions. It is always the people who suffer.”

In 2016, the Regional Synod of the EKiR in its resolution “Steps on the Way to Justice and Peace in Israel and Palestine,” committed itself to binding international law and demanded that “a state of Israel living in security and a Palestinian state should coexist in peace and security and mutual recognition of their state sovereignty and integrity.” In 2021, the church leadership of the EKiR supported the demand for an “end of continued settlement construction and concrete efforts to end the occupation.” Against the background of current media reports, this includes the demand that the current government’s support for militant Israeli settlers, including the non-prosecution of crimes, must end.

The EKiR hears the call and shares the request of Christian brothers and sisters in the Middle East for prayer and solidarity. For many years, it has been supporting organizations and initiatives in Israel and Palestine that are committed to dialogue, reconciliation and peace. And it continuously supports the churches in the Holy Land, most recently through donations for the educational work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Holy Land and for the hospital of the Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem in Gaza.

The workbook for Israel Sunday on August 24, 2025, for which the EKiR is jointly responsible, includes a declaration by the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) on the deepening of interreligious relations, which expresses the longing for the day “when peace dawns and Palestinians as well as Israelis, Christians, Muslims and Jews can live in peace and security.” In this context, Senior Church Councillor Dr. Wibke Janssen, Head of Department 1 – Theology and Ecumenism – in the Regional Church Office, also calls for the World Council of Churches to focus more on encounters and discussions with Jewish organizations (e.g. International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations, IJCIC) and leads the Christian-Jewish dialogue in a committed and ongoing manner. The above-mentioned ICCJ statement states: “Dialogue is more important than ever. ... Wherever we live and under whatever circumstances, we commit ourselves to be a blessing to each other and thus to the world.”

Düsseldorf, 25 July 2025