

Break the silence.

What it means for a congregation to name the genocide in Gaza — and how to do it.

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What we're asking

A congregation breaks the silence when it says, publicly and together, what is happening: **the killing in Gaza is a genocide**. Not a pastor's private conviction. Not a hallway conversation after the service. A public act of the whole church — written down, voted on, published, and preached — so that the record shows where this congregation stood.

The ask, in one sentence: **adopt and publish a public statement, as a congregation, naming the genocide in Gaza.**

Why naming matters

The church has been here before, and it has left us instructions. In South Africa in 1985, the Kairos theologians named the difference between “state theology” that blesses injustice, “church theology” that hides behind vague calls for peace and reconciliation, and “prophetic theology” that names injustice as sin and acts. In Nazi Germany, the Confessing Church at Barmen understood that a moment comes when a statement is not a policy opinion but a confession — when the church's own identity is at stake in what it will and will not say. And from a Birmingham jail cell, Martin Luther King Jr. wrote that his greatest stumbling block was not the Klan, but the moderate church — more devoted to order than to justice.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose witness we follow, called the church to “see the great events of world history from below ... from the perspective of those who suffer.” From below — from under the rubble — the Palestinian church has already told us what it sees, and what it needs from us. In October 2023, Palestinian Christians wrote an open letter to the Western church titled “A Call for Repentance,” grieved above all by one thing: our silence.

Let it be clear: Silence is complicity, and empty calls for peace without a ceasefire and end to occupation, and the shallow words of empathy without direct action — are all under the banner of complicity.

— Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac, “Christ in the Rubble,” Bethlehem, December 23, 2023

You will not be the first

Naming the genocide is not a fringe act. It is what much of the global church has already done, by overwhelming votes:

Body	Date	Action
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 227th General Assembly	July 2026	Recognized the war in Gaza as genocide, 454-15; divested from Palantir and GE Aerospace unanimously
United Church of Christ, General Synod 35	July 2025	"Declaration for an End to Genocide in Palestine," 594-32
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Churchwide Assembly	Aug 2025	Called members to press U.S. leaders to "recognize and act to end the genocide," 742-38
World Council of Churches (352 member churches)	June 2025	Central Committee: Gaza campaign "may constitute genocide"; first call is "naming the reality"
Eight global Quaker organizations (incl. AFSC)	July 2025	Jointly discerned "the crime of genocide" is occurring; opened public endorsement to congregations
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	July 2025	Resolution GA-2571 affirming the WCC call, in "solidarity ... for an end to Genocide"
United Reformed Church (UK)	July 2025	Emergency resolution condemning Israel's actions in Gaza as genocide
Pope Francis	Nov 2024	What is happening in Gaza "has the characteristics of a genocide" and "should be carefully investigated"

The ground you stand on

A congregation that names the genocide is not ahead of the evidence — it is standing on it:

- **The International Court of Justice** found South Africa's genocide case plausible enough to order provisional measures in January 2024. The merits ruling will take years — but the Genocide Convention's duty to prevent begins at serious risk, not after a verdict.
- **The UN Commission of Inquiry** concluded in September 2025 that Israeli authorities "have committed and are continuing to commit genocide" in Gaza; a UN Special Committee had already found Israel's methods "consistent with the characteristics of genocide" (Nov 2024).
- **The world's leading genocide scholars** — the International Association of Genocide Scholars, whose members include Holocaust scholars — resolved in August 2025, with 86% support, that Israel's policies and actions in Gaza "meet the legal definition of genocide."
- **Human-rights investigators** reached the same conclusion — Amnesty International (Dec 2024), and, in July 2025, B'Tselem and Physicians for Human Rights Israel, the first Israeli human-rights organizations to name their own government's campaign a genocide.

What breaking the silence looks like

Five marks of a congregation on record:

1. **Say it together.** Your governing body — session, vestry, council, elder board — votes to adopt a written statement naming the genocide. (A statement you can adapt is below.)
2. **Publish it.** On your church website and in your bulletin, and on the public record at churchdivest.org, alongside every other congregation that has spoken.
3. **Say it from the pulpit.** A statement buried in a PDF is not broken silence. Preach it. Pray for Gaza by name in the pastoral prayer.
4. **Send it upward.** A letter to your denomination and to your members of Congress. Denominations move when congregations push — that is how every vote in the table above began.
5. **Let it cost something.** Pair the words with a material act: a study series, support for relief, and the second ask — divestment. Words that cost nothing change nothing.

A statement you can adapt

As followers of Jesus at [congregation name], we can no longer be silent. What is happening in Gaza is a genocide — the deliberate destruction of a people. We say this with the World Council of Churches and churches across every tradition, with the warnings of the International Court of Justice, with Israeli human-rights organizations, with the world's leading genocide scholars — and with the Palestinian Christians who asked the church to speak. We grieve every life taken, Palestinian and Israeli. We reject antisemitism, anti-Palestinian racism, and Islamophobia without qualification, and we reject every theology that blesses destruction. We commit ourselves to prayer, to truth-telling, and to concrete action — including an honest look at where our money sits — until this genocide ends and all people in the land live in safety, dignity, and freedom. Adopted by [governing body], [date].

The hesitations, honestly

“This is too political for church.” Silence is not neutral — it is a position, and everyone in your pews knows it. The Kairos theologians called vague even-handedness “church theology” and named it a failure of faith, not a form of it. Genocide is not a partisan issue; it is the thing the church exists to say no to.

“We’ll risk our 501(c)(3).” No. The Johnson Amendment restricts candidate campaigning, not moral witness on public issues. Churches speak on war, abortion, immigration, and poverty every week. Whole denominations have adopted the statements above with zero tax consequence.

“We’ll be accused of antisemitism.” Say what the World Council of Churches said: there is a clear distinction between the Jewish people, our siblings in faith, and the acts of a government. The genocide finding is shared by Israeli human-rights groups and by scholars of the Holocaust. Put the rejection of antisemitism in your statement itself — and mean it.

“Shouldn’t we wait for the courts?” The ICJ will take years, and the Genocide Convention was written precisely so the world would not wait. The duty to prevent begins when serious risk is known. The church’s own history — Barmen, Birmingham, Kairos — is a history of speaking before it was safe, because afterward is too late.

Go on record

Every congregation ready to lead will find us alongside them the whole way. Register your statement, or ask for help getting one adopted: churchdivest.org/act · hello@churchdivest.org. You don’t have to do this alone.

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