

# Religions for Peace

## Secretary General's Statement on the Conflict in the Middle East

**3 March 2026, New York, NY:** It is with great sadness and deep concern that we witness renewed conflict in the Middle East. We stand in solidarity with the people across the region who are suffering by the current hostilities – above all, the world must prioritize their well-being and respect for human rights, sovereignty, and rule of law.

Respect for human dignity and the right to life must serve as the primary lens through which all international engagement is viewed. These are not concessions to be granted, but fundamental pillars that cannot be compromised for strategic or military gain. When we fail to centre the dignity of the individual, we erode the moral authority of the laws meant to protect us all, leaving the most vulnerable to bear the unconscionable costs of war.

We are profoundly alarmed by the recent developments. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of states must remain inviolate as per the United Nations Charter. Any use of military force must strictly comply with international humanitarian law. In particular, religious sites, religious leaders, and civilian must not be targeted – the protection of civilians must be ensured above all.

We are mindful of concerns raised about the danger of nuclear proliferation. Such a nuclear proliferation would understandably increase peace and security concerns in a fragile context. However, such concerns can only be dealt with through dialogue, regional security cooperation and respect for internationally recognised treaties and mechanisms for all parties. Dividing the world into “good states” that can have nuclear weapons and alleged “bad states” that should not is not a viable long-term solution. The abolishment of nuclear weapons is the only viable long-term solution.

The people of Iran continue to bear the greatest burden of the current crisis. They are a population vulnerable to the greatest suffering and loss of life due to the ongoing conflict – including acute humanitarian hardship and sustained constraints on the enjoyment of fundamental rights, calling for continued international attention and accompaniment. We also recognize the suffering of other neighbours and the global community due to the disruption of important oil distribution routes.

Our primary commitment must be to the shared sacred flourishing of these citizens, ensuring that the polity serves their best interests and fully respects their fundamental human rights.

### **A Global Appeal**

In the spirit of our shared humanity and faith, we make the following urgent calls and appeals:

#### ***The Critical Need to Respect International Law***

We express grave concern about developments that risk eroding sovereignty and the violation of international legal norms. Respect for sovereignty and the rule of law must go hand in hand with credible, impartial processes that address serious peace and security challenges of all and the legitimate needs of all communities in the region.

We are particularly concerned about the recent actions being taken outside multilateral frameworks. Unilateral interventions such as these are weakening the rules-based international order that protects the sovereignty and security of all nations.

Further, while the elimination of nuclear weapons programs is essential, their elimination must be pursued through credible, impartial, and internationally recognized legal mechanisms. All countries should engage intensively in the upcoming talks regarding the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty and the November review of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

### ***All Attacks Must Stop***

We call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and return to a negotiated settlement of any dispute. Continued retaliation will only deepen civilian suffering and further destabilize the region. Durable security cannot be achieved through military escalation; it requires sustained diplomatic engagement grounded in international law.

### ***Ensuring Unhindered Access for Humanitarian Aid***

All parties to the ongoing conflict must also ensure the humanitarian situation in the Middle East does not degrade. We call on all parties—regardless of political or military status—to guarantee unhindered, safe, and sustained access for humanitarian aid. The protection of civilians is paramount. We reaffirm that the safeguarding of civilian lives and human dignity must remain a central priority of all actors currently operating within the country.

Let this moment be a turning point —from prolonged suffering to healing, from fear to hope, from impunity to accountability grounded in justice and law.

We stand in solidarity with the people of the region who have endured untold violence and displacement. Silence in the face of such suffering is not an option. As religious leaders and people of faith, we reaffirm the sacred value of every human life and our unwavering commitment to peace, justice, and reconciliation.

Let us unite in prayer and action for the region—that peace, justice, and human dignity may prevail.