



St. Luke's Episcopal Church
Spirituality in Action

Rector's Statement
on Violence in the Levant

December 19, 2023
The Commemoration of Lillian Trasher

Dear Friends,

I join Presiding Bishop Curry in praying for peace and longing for an end to the killing in Israel and Palestine. Bishop Curry gives us a solemn warning when he writes, "Staying quiet in this moment would be a stain upon our souls and would deepen our complicity." The one thing I believe the Presiding Bishop's statement of 7 November lacks, along with most media coverage of these horrible events, is a willingness to recognize and name the evils of Hamas. It is a sad reality that the Presiding Bishop's statement, and much news coverage, names both Israel and Palestine but does not name Hamas.

We must state that both Israel and Palestine have and are suffering because of Hamas. It must be remembered that there are credible reports of Israeli people—men, women, and children—being taken captive, tortured, raped, and beheaded. Further, Hamas has dug its tunnels and built its bases under civilian structures, using the Palestinian people as its shields. These evils cannot be allowed to slip out of view and into silence.

In the 9th Century CE, the great Islamic scholar Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari wrote that "During some of the battles of the Prophet (pbuh) a woman was found killed. Allah's Apostle disapproved the killing of women and children." Further, Surah 17:33 of the Qur'an outlaws the killing of innocent civilians. I am not an Islamic scholar, but I am saddened that by silence about Hamas' attack of Israel on 7 October 2023, we fail to recognize the differences between our peace loving Muslim neighbors and the evil behavior of Hamas. Such silence also runs the risk of being passively anti-Semitic, ignoring the evil that Israel is suffering.

As we remember Lillian Hunt Trasher, who spent her life caring for orphaned children and building a large orphanage in Egypt, let us remember that, as "Mama" Lillian knew, life's problems must be squarely faced in order to be addressed. Evil is only overcome when we bring it into the light.

The Rev. Dr. Randall R. Warren, Rector