

The URC offers these prayers for public or private use following the outbreak of hostilities in Israel and Palestine. They may be freely used; no permission is needed.

You Shall Not Kill

O Lord,
we hear the news and don't know what to say,
we see those scenes of violence and don't know how to pray;
we read of people fighting over the Land and know it was ever thus.

We see the surprise and shock,
hear the cries for revenge,
taste the violence begetting more pain and sorrow,
and touch the bitterness of oppression and loss breeding yet more violence;
a vicious circle that destroys life and land leading to despair and hopelessness.

We hear of international outrage and messages of support,
but know there's more to this complex story of land, justice, faith, security, and
history than can be encapsulated in easy sound bites.

We watch, listen, read, and try to pray but there are no words in us.
Lord, You told us not to kill;
a commandment venerated and wrestled with by Jews, Christians, and Muslims;
a hard commandment:
one we always want some wiggle room with
yet today we see Your children killing each other.

Violence

as a weapon of oppression,
purporting to be a weapon of protest, seeking to be a bargaining chip
disfigures our humanity, distorts our perception, and disables our discipleship.
In these desperate times, Lord, give strength to those who work for peace:
diplomats and governments calling for restraint,
the Red Cross offering to visit all who are detained,
faith leaders proclaiming Your commandments in a world at war
and peace lovers praying for justice.

Bind up the broken hearted,
give grace to those seeking to end the spiral of violence,
grant wisdom to those seeking peaceful ways to resolve age old conflicts;
and give us the prayers, words, and perseverance needed
to make our discipleship, our efforts for peace and justice count. Amen.

Why the hell can't you stop this, Lord?

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Why can't You protect the women and children?

They will suffer the most: hiding in cellars and safe rooms.

Children too afraid to go out to play or attend school.

Wives and lovers scared to death about those taken hostage.

Women crying in dark and fear whilst the men plan to wage war and seek revenge!

Why the hell can't you stop this, Lord?

Those kids won't grow up to trust and make peace.

Israeli kids will be taught to fear their neighbours and look at the sky with trepidation;

Palestinian children will suffer in yet more blockades, further economic punishment, new life-limiting travel restrictions, additional educational restrictions.

Children from all sides learning to hate and wage war!

Why the hell can't you stop this, Lord?

Hundreds have been killed, thousands wounded,

hostages taken, people afraid to leave their homes for fear of fighting.

Political leaders will seek to maximise their importance,

using dreadful words and tools to legitimise their views,

whilst the world looks on wringing its hands!

Why the hell can't you stop this, Lord?

You're Almighty aren't You?

Jew, Christian, Muslim – all agree on that don't we?

You've the power so use it!

Show some of that glory we say You have!

Don't you care for the women and the children, Lord?

Has the Cross taught you nothing, my child?

Might is found in weakness, power in humility, glory at the tip.

I weep with the women and the children;

I rage at the violence and hatred;

I curse the hypocrisy.

I've been to Hell remember, but it's up to you to stop it.

For Peace and Justice

O Most High,
Your people rage over the Land,
war and terror engulf those who seek to follow You,
hundreds have died, thousands have been wounded,
and this is just the beginning.

Jesus, Incarnate Word,
give strength to those working for peace in the midst of war;
doctors, nurses, and medics tending the wounded,
fire fighters and rescue workers pulling people from the ruin of their lives,
regional leaders calling for calm.

Eternal Flame of Love,
teach us all the ways of peace;
bring to justice those:
who wage war, violence and terror,
who limit life, steal land, use law to oppress.

Eternal Trinity,
show us quickly how to turn away from violence,
pursue costly justice
and live in peace with each other and with the earth.
Amen.