

Women Religious Urge Immediate Ceasefire in Lebanon, Israel and Gaza

St. Louis area congregations of women religious call for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire by the Israeli army and the Hezbollah militia currently engaged in violent combat in Lebanon, Israel and Gaza.

We condemn Hezbollah's deliberate invasion of Israeli borders, the abduction of two Israeli soldiers and the targeting of Israeli citizens. The Hezbollah militia, which does not act in the name of the Lebanese government, has gravely endangered the citizens of Lebanon, the young, fragile democracy of that nation, and the infrastructure that supports the country.

We condemn the disproportionate response of Israel, killing and wounding hundreds of citizens of Lebanon, and inflicting massive damage on the essential infrastructure of that country. We concur with the Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Angelo Sodano who stated that: "Defense by a state is not exempt from abidance by the norms of international law, especially as regards the safeguarding of civilian populations." We also condemn Israel's continued military actions against the Palestinian civilians of Gaza.

As citizens of the United States we call on President George W. Bush and his administration to join with the United Nations and the international community in working towards a peaceful resolution to this conflict. We call upon the members of congress to act decisively and immediately mandate that the United States take action to end the violence now.

We commit ourselves and the members of our religious communities to exercise all of our rights and duties as citizens to urge our leaders to act as responsible members of the world community. We join our prayer with religious people of all faiths who long for peace, who believe in a God of peace, and who are working to make God's dream for a world at peace a reality.

The participating St. Louis area congregations are members of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, a national organization of 850 leaders of communities of Catholic sisters.

Adorers of the Blood of Christ

Franciscan Sisters of Mary

Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help

School Sisters of Notre Dame

Sisters of Divine Providence

Sisters of Loretto

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Regional Community of St. Louis

Sisters of the Most Precious Blood Leadership Team

Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet

Society of the Sacred Heart, U.S. Provincial Team

Ursuline Sisters of the Central Province

