

Joint Statement on Freedom Day: Solidarity, Truth, Unity, and the Call to Repentance and Justice

Cape Town, South Africa, April 27, 2026: On this Freedom Day in South Africa, a day that commemorates the end of apartheid and the birth of a democratic nation, we, representatives of the [Reformed Church in America](#) (RCA), [Churches for Middle East Peace](#) (CMEP) and the [South African Council of Churches](#) (SACC), together with our ecumenical partners, the [Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa](#) (URCSA) and the [Dutch Reformed Church](#) (DRC), offer this joint statement in a spirit of solidarity, truth-telling, and faithful witness.

We mark this day with deep gratitude for the people of South Africa, whose long struggle against apartheid remains a profound testimony to the power of faith, justice, and collective action. Freedom Day is not only a celebration of political liberation, it is for us as churches, a theological witness to the manifestation of God in the person of Jesus, who calls us to “proclaim freedom for the prisoners... and to set the oppressed free” (Luke 4:18). It is in this spirit that the CMEP and RCA delegation from the United States of America (USA) has come to South Africa from April 19–27: to listen, to learn, to pray, and to stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in Christ, particularly those of the Reformed tradition.

The Purpose of Our Delegation

The U.S. pastors’ delegation is first and foremost an expression of solidarity, with churches across South Africa, and particularly as the RCA with our Reformed partners in URCSA and the DRC, as well as the broader ecumenical witness of the SACC. We come not as those with all the answers, but as those seeking discernment together: How is God calling us to respond to this moment in our respective countries, the Middle East, and in the world?

We gather to reflect on the shared and interconnected realities facing our contexts in the United States, South Africa, and Palestine/Israel. We recognize that the church is called not only to spiritual reflection but to prophetic engagement in the face of injustice, violence, and dehumanization wherever it occurs.

As part of our commitment to truth, we explicitly reject the false narrative of a so-called “white genocide” in South Africa. This claim has been widely discredited by experts and research institutions, including findings from the Institute for Security Studies (ISS). ISS concludes, “Farm attacks are a serious crime problem requiring dedicated law enforcement attention, but they do not amount to genocide.” ISS provides a detailed policy brief called [“Farm attacks in South Africa: setting the record straight”](#) and asserts that farm attacks, whose victims include people of all races, “represent a small part of violent crime overall in South Africa and their patterns are consistent with criminal rather than political motives. Recent statistics show a decline in violent farm crime. Effective rural safety solutions include stronger policing, community cooperation, and tackling the root causes of South Africa’s broader crime challenges.”

While violence, racial injustice, and economic inequality remain serious concerns in South Africa, these realities must not be distorted to perpetuate fear or to obscure the enduring structural injustices rooted in apartheid’s legacy. Truth matters. And the church must be a witness to truth, even when it is uncomfortable or politically inconvenient. Therefore, we also need to raise our serious concern about the levels of violence in the South African society in general, but specifically gender based violence, gangsterism, and the murdering of whistle blowers in the struggle against the scourge of corruption sweeping across this country.

At the same time, we affirm with urgency and clarity that the ongoing realities in Palestine

demand our moral and theological response. We further recognise, in line with the witness of the global church and human rights bodies, that the situation reflects the characteristics of an apartheid system that enforces separation, domination, and systemic oppression over the Palestinian people. We echo the growing consensus among international legal scholars, human rights organizations, and genocide experts who have concluded that the threshold for genocide, as defined under international law, has been met in Gaza. On September 16, 2025, the [UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry](#) concluded that Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. The commission determined that Israel is implementing four out of the five acts of genocide as defined by the 1948 convention, including “direct evidence of genocidal intent” by Israeli officials. In addition, the [International Association of Genocide Scholars \(IAGS\)](#), the world’s largest organization of academic genocide experts, issued a resolution recognizing that “since the horrific Hamas-led attack of 7 October 2023, which itself constitutes international crimes, the government of Israel has engaged in systematic and widespread crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide, including indiscriminate and deliberate attacks against the civilians and civilian infrastructure (hospitals, homes, commercial buildings, etc.) of Gaza.”

We grieve the immense loss of life, tens of thousands killed, including thousands of children, and the devastation of entire communities. We mourn with all who suffer (Romans 12:15): Palestinians living under occupation and siege, and Israelis who have experienced violence and trauma. Yet grief alone is not enough. Silence is not an option.

We must also confess that the church itself has not been innocent. Too often, we have remained silent in the face of injustice, hesitant to speak where clarity was required, and divided where unity was demanded. We repent of our complicity, whether through silence, selective outrage, or theological ambiguity, that has allowed systems of oppression to persist under our watch. Solidarity in Christ demands not only that we stand with the oppressed, but that we turn away from all that diminishes their dignity. Repentance is not a private act of remorse; it is a public turning toward justice, truth, and courageous witness.

As followers of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, we are compelled to act. The church must stand to dismantle unjust systems and work to end the disproportionate use of power, violence, and war in Palestine and wherever injustice may be.

South Africa’s history offers not only inspiration, but also instruction. The global church played a vital role in the struggle against apartheid through advocacy, economic pressure, theological resistance, and moral clarity. Today, we ask: What lessons from that struggle must be applied to the realities in the U.S., South Africa, and Palestine and Israel?

Central to our discussions this past week, were the enduring significance of the [Belhar Confession](#), born out of the struggle against apartheid. We confess racism, superiority, and privilege that are identified as sins of the church in the Belhar Confession. The Confession rejects any ideology that legitimizes separation, inequality, or oppression. Its message remains profoundly relevant today, as we confront systems that divide and dehumanize. The Belhar Confession serves as a roadmap for today by which the church may embody principles of the Good News of the Gospel in pursuit of unity, reconciliation, and justice.

We issue this statement as both a declaration and a call:

A call to the global church to fulfill our moral obligation and speak with courage and clarity.

A call for the church to repent of our unwillingness to have hard conversations and our complicity in not calling for the dismantling of any unjust systems of power and being willing to speak truth to power.

A call to governments, including the United States and South Africa, to pursue policies rooted in justice, human dignity, and international law.

A call to end all forms of violence in the United States, Southern Africa, and the Middle East; to end occupation and the collective punishment of groups, peoples, or nations.

A call to dismantle systems of apartheid wherever it exists.

A call to bring an immediate end to the genocide in Gaza and wherever genocide may be.

We are living in a time of profound global brokenness, marked by war, division, and injustice. Yet we hold fast to the promise that “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5).

On this South African Freedom Day, may we recommit ourselves to the work of justice, peace, and reconciliation. May we walk together, in solidarity across continents and contexts, trusting that God is still at work in the world, calling us to be agents of transformation.

And may we have the courage not only to pray for peace, but to pursue it.

Signed,



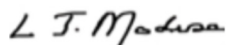
Rev. Eddy Aleman
General Secretary
Reformed Church in America (RCA)



Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon
Executive Director
Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP)



Reverend Mzwandile Molo
General Secretary
South African Council of Churches (SACC)



Professor Leepo John Modise
Moderator of the General Synod
Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA)



Ecumenical Officer
Rev. Dr. Nioma Venter
Dutch Reformed Church (DRC)