

*****WASHINGTON INTERFAITH ALLIANCE FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE*****

(www.wiamep.org)

*****SHARING JERUSALEM*****

(www.sharingjerusalem.org)

*****THE AMERICAN-ARAB ANTI-DISCRIMINATION COMMITTEE*****

(www.adc.org)

PRESS RELEASE, 1/ 25/ 08

***** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE *****

--Event on January 27, 2008--

Contact: Paul Verduin – 301-495-7891 – paulverduin@starpower.net

Deeply concerned by the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza, people of all faiths in the Washington area will gather Sunday afternoon at a church on Wisconsin Avenue to pray—and later, outside the Israeli Embassy, to hold vigil—in gestures of solidarity with Israelis and Palestinians rallying this weekend on the Israel-Gaza border to demand an end to the 10-day Israeli blockade.

A statement issued recently by leaders of Christian churches in Jerusalem decries the crisis in Gaza where, according to the statement, "one and a half million people [are] imprisoned without proper food and medicine" (www.hcef.org, click on "A Message from the Heads of Churches..."). This Saturday a convoy of concerned Israelis, representing more than twenty private organizations including Gush Shalom and Combatants for Peace, is planning to travel to the Israel-Gaza border with relief supplies including much-needed water filters and food provisions (www.gush-shalom.org, English-language version).

Here in Washington, the paired Jan. 27 interfaith events of prayer and vigil, sponsored by the Washington Interfaith Alliance for Middle East Peace, Sharing Jerusalem and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) are among at least a score of activities being held in the D.C. area and elsewhere in support of the action at the border with Gaza. The prayer service will be held at St. Alban's Episcopal Church, 3001 Wisconsin Ave., NW, at 2 p.m. The church is located just north of Massachusetts Avenue, immediately adjacent to the National Cathedral.

Led by a Christian minister, a Jewish rabbi and a Muslim imam, Sunday's prayer service will provide an opportunity for people of all faiths to give voice to their distress for the safety and well-being of the 1.5 million people of Gaza suffering since Thursday from a cut-off by Israel of such basic human necessities as food, medicine, and the fuel required for the territory's sole operating power plant. Following the service, those attending are invited to proceed by car to the Israeli Embassy for an outdoor vigil at the embassy demanding an end to the blockade. The Israeli Embassy is located at 3514 International Drive, N.W., at the corner of Van Ness Street, two blocks west of Connecticut Avenue.

The prayer service at the church and the vigil at the embassy will give expression to demands for a termination of the Israeli blockade of Gaza and an end to violence committed by both sides of the struggle. According to news reports, water supplies in Gaza are polluted due to the shutdown of sewage treatment facilities stemming from disruptions in the electrical power grid caused by the blockade. Safe drinking water is reported to be in short supply, according to the Washington Post and other media accounts. On Wednesday, Gazans destroyed and breached the seven-mile-long barrier along the border with Egypt, streaming over the barricade to buy food, fuel and other provisions. Vigils and protests calling for a end to the blockade of Gaza and its horrendous consequences are being held this weekend in nearly a dozen U.S. and Canadian cities. ****