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## NEWS RELEASE

### **San Diego Cardinal and New Mexico Archbishop Call for Immediate Ceasefire in Gaza**

ALBUQUERQUE – Wednesday, January 17, 2024—IMMEDIATE RELEASE— Cardinal Robert McElroy, Bishop of San Diego, CA, and Most Reverend John C. Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe, NM, released the following statement today condemning Hamas and calling for an “immediate and total” halt to military action in Gaza:

“The continuing war in Gaza that has killed tens of thousands of men, women, and children, and threatens to increase violence throughout the Middle East calls us as Americans to press for a national policy which is focused unswervingly on an immediate and total ceasefire.

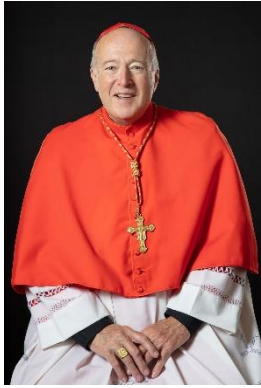
“The massacre of more than thirteen hundred innocent Israelis, including children, and the abhorrent victimization of women on October 7th stands as a shocking attack by Hamas upon the most basic principles of human dignity. It absolutely delegitimizes any future role for Hamas in the Middle East and underscores the right of Israel to bring to justice all those who carried out this outrage. Moreover, the piercing moral claim of releasing the hostages should be a priority for the whole international community.

“The siege of Gaza has lasted more than one hundred days and has already resulted in the deaths of more than 23,000 people, most of them innocent civilians. This is more than one percent of the entire population of Gaza. Proportionately for the United States, this would represent more than 3.5 million lives. In addition, the infrastructure, housing and commerce of Gaza has been systematically destroyed by Israeli attacks, rendering much of the population homeless. A humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding in Gaza before the eyes of the world. In such a conflict, continuing such warfare is neither just nor tolerable.

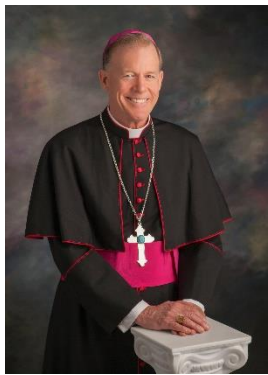
“In addition, there is tremendous risk that the present war will produce major conflict in Lebanon, increase violence in the West Bank, and cause outbreaks throughout the Middle East.

“It is for these reasons that Pope Francis has called repeatedly in these days for an end to military action in the Holy Land. ‘I continue to follow the conflict in Israel and Palestine with much worry and pain.... I renew my call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire: there is so much suffering there.’ Only such a cease fire can end the humanitarian disaster in Gaza, stop the growing risk of expanded warfare in the Middle East and maximize the chance of returning the hostages to their families alive.

“It is critical for us in the United States to support this call for an immediate ceasefire, and to press for our government to make it the centerpiece of its foreign policy in the Middle East at this pivotal moment. Our country has a powerful voice on these issues. Let it echo Pope Francis’s call amidst suffering on all sides ‘No to weapons, yes to peace.’ For this will be the only true pathway for justice in the land that so deeply reflects the presence of God.”



Cardinal Robert McElroy, Bishop of San Diego



Most Rev. John C. Wester, Archdiocese of Santa Fe

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