Catholic Religious Australia condemns Hamas' atrocities against Israeli civilians and calls for safe, immediate release of hostages

Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) strongly condemns the attacks by Hamas militants against Israeli civilians and calls for the safe and immediate release of Israeli hostages in Gaza.

"The deliberately planned strike on Israeli towns, during the quiet of a Jewish holy day, demonstrated to the world a violent disregard for human life and dignity, and a devastating setback for peacebuilding efforts in an already stressed region," said Peter Jones OSA, President of CRA.

"Our hearts go out to the families of the hundreds of Israelis who have been murdered, violated or abducted — of all ages, many of them young people — and we pray for the safe return of their loved ones who have been taken hostage," he continued. "We can only imagine their fear and trauma at this time."

"We also express our deep concern for the Palestinian people in Gaza," said Peter Jones OSA. They are suffering immensely as a result of this Hamas-initiated conflict, as Israel strives to free hostages and to defend itself. We pray for those Palestinian families whose loved ones have been killed or wounded. We stand with them, too, in their loss, fear and trauma."

CRA calls upon the church communities, NGOs and all people of faith and goodwill who advocate for human rights to apply pressure for the immediate, unconditional release of all Israelis and foreign nationals held in Gaza, and for the bodies of the dead to be returned to their grieving families.

"CRA joins with Pope Francis in praying for all who are grieving during these days marked by terror and war," said Anne Walker, CRA's National Executive Director.

"We fear that last weekend's unprecedented attacks will lead to a devastating loss of civilian lives for both Israelis and Palestinians, and fervently pray for renewed peacebuilding efforts," she concluded.