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Palestinian men sit amid the rubble of destroyed houses and buildings at the area around Al Shifa Hospital amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, in Gaza City April 1. (OSV News/Reuters/Dawoud Abu Alkas)



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**Editor's note:** *Global Sisters Report's Monday Starter is a feature from GSR staff writers that rounds up news from or about women religious that you may otherwise have missed.*

# Monday Starter

More than 150 sisters, along with organizations that represent them, have signed a [letter](#) urging a halt of U.S. arms shipments to Israel, the release of hostages held by Hamas and more robust efforts to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza.

The May 1 "Letter from U.S. Catholics on Israel-Palestine" directs its message to "fellow Catholic" President Joe Biden, as well as international leaders to do more to end hostilities in the Holy Land.

"Guided by our faith, the signs of the times, and our personal capabilities, we Catholics are called to pray, speak, and work for peace," the letter says. "As the people of God, the Church, we join together in the hope that the land where Jesus lived, died, and rose will one day see an end to bloodshed and know true justice and reconciliation."

The letter expresses sorrow for civilians killed by Hamas and concern for those still held hostage. But it also expresses sorrow for civilians killed in Gaza by Israeli forces as well as settlers, and those who still suffer there.

"As U.S. Catholics, we recognize our country's contribution to the present violence and to the ongoing systemic injustices in Israel-Palestine," says the letter signed by sisters including Social Service Sr. Simone Campbell, formerly of Network lobby; theologian Sr. Elizabeth Johnson of the Sisters of Saint Joseph; and Mercy Sisters Michelle Gorman and Ginger Andrews.

## **Latin America religious express solidarity with Haiti**

The Confederation of Latin American and Caribbean Religious, or CLAR, is calling on nations to help establish humanitarian corridors near border crossings with Haiti to help people suffering from violence in the troubled nation.



A member of CLAR places her crucifix on top of a piece of felt in the shape of Haiti in front of an altar before Mass at the Catholic University campus in Las Tres Rosas, Honduras, April 18. (GSR photo/Rhina Guidos)

In a [statement](#), CLAR emphasized its support and solidarity for consecrated life in Haiti, "persevering in the midst of obstacles." The organization asked for constant prayers from others in religious life, warning against indifference in light of what Haiti is going through.

The United Nations in an April 22 [press release](#) said deadly violence in Haiti is at a "record high," and worst-case scenarios have come to fruition, with armed groups including more and more minors in its ranks, taking over infrastructure, including "educational and health facilities, and religious sites."

According to U.N. figures for the first quarter of 2024, "around 2,500 persons were killed or injured as a result of gang violence — a 53 % increase as compared to the previous reporting period."

CLAR said it "joins the cry" of those who demand a halt to the violence, and it advocates for the "recovery of the institutional framework that makes democracy and respect for rights possible."

It asked its members to make the suffering of Haiti present in the communities where they serve.

"For CLAR, it is urgent to promote dialogue between civil society and political actors, defend peace with concrete actions and promote means that allow reconciliation in the midst of differences," the organization said in the statement. It asked for "insistent prayers" from the people of God for a stop to the violence, while encouraging hope in the midst of adversity.

"CLAR reminds us that, in the face of adversity, union in prayer and hope are more necessary than ever," the statement said.

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### **Australia honors sister for prison chaplaincy**

Australia's Royal Victorian Association of Honorary Justice has honored Good Samaritan Sr. Mary O'Shannassy with a Life Membership award following 30 years in prison chaplaincy.

In addition to being a chaplain, she's also a justice of the peace, which has come in handy among the populations she has served for decades.

"People have very many needs when they are in prison and it can be hard for them to get someone to witness documents," O'Shannassy said, according to [The Good Oil](#) , a publication of the [Sisters of the Good Samaritan of the Order of St. Benedict](#). "As

a JP I've been able to look after a variety of those needs, including documents delegating authority for the care of other relatives, such as parents, their siblings and, at times, their own children."

She has previously received an honorary [doctorate](#) degree from the Australian Catholic University and an [Order of Australia](#) medal.