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STATEMENT

Statement of Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago “A Call to Conscience”

ALBUQUERQUE—Sunday, March 8, 2026 —IMMEDIATE RELEASE— Below is a statement of Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, “A Call to Conscience.”

As more than 1,000 Iranian men, women and children lay dead after days of bombardment from U.S. and Israeli missiles, the official White House X account on Thursday evening posted a video of scenes from popular action movies spliced with actual strike footage from their war on Iran. The clip was captioned: “JUSTICE THE AMERICAN WAY.”

A real war with real death and real suffering being treated like it’s a video game — it’s sickening. Hundreds of people are dead, mothers and fathers, daughters and sons, including scores of children who made the fatal mistake of going to school that day. Six U.S. soldiers have been killed. They are also dishonored by that social media post. Hundreds of thousands displaced, and many millions more are terrified across the Middle East.

This horrifying portrayal demonstrates that we now live in an era when the distance between the battlefield and the living room has been drastically reduced. The moral crisis we are facing is not just a matter of the war itself, but also how we, the observers, view violence, for war now has become a spectator sport or strategy game. Indeed, the prediction market Kalshi recently paid a \$2.2 million settlement related to users who were unhappy with how the company paid out the \$55 million wagered on Iran’s Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei’s ouster after his was killed.

Journalists now use the term “gamifying” the war to describe this dynamic. What a profound moral failure, for gamifying strips away the humanity of real people. Let’s not forget, a “hit” isn’t putting points on the board; it’s a grieving family whose suffering we ignore when we prioritize entertainment, and profit, over empathy.

Our government is treating the suffering of the Iranian people as a backdrop for our own entertainment, as if it’s just another piece of content to be swiped through while we’re waiting in line at the grocery store. But, in the end, we lose our humanity when we are thrilled by the destructive power of our military. We become addicted to the “spectacle” of explosions. And the price of this habit is almost unnoticeable, as we become desensitized to the true costs of war. But the longer we remain blind to the terrible consequences of war, the more we are risking the most precious gift God gave us: our humanity.

I know that the American people are better than this. We have the good sense to know that what is happening is not entertainment but war, and that Iran is a nation of people, not a video game others play to entertain us.

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