



Meeting of the 2021 Holy Land Co-ordination

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The Bishops of the Holy Land Co-ordination, an international annual pilgrimage to the Holy Land, have released a final communique having met remotely this year due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.

The Bishops engaged in a number of online sessions from 16 – 21 January to examine the realities and challenges facing not just the Christians but all the people of the region.

“We remain resolutely committed to supporting our sisters and brothers in the homeland of Christ,” they write. “Over the past week we have been privileged and moved to hear from Christians across the West Bank, Gaza and Israel about their mission, resilience and witness in these unprecedented circumstances.”

The bishops acknowledge that there is less cause for optimism at the present time than at any time in recent history.

At a time of political change they call on Israeli and Palestinian leaderships to recommit to direct negotiations to achieve peace.

They implore the governments and political leaders of their home countries to work ‘actively’ towards this end by “supporting dialogue between all sides, upholding international law, and reaffirming the plurality of Jerusalem, given its unique significance for Jews, Christians and Muslims.”

Covid Vaccinations for Palestinians

The communique calls on the international community to “hold Israel accountable for its moral, legal and humanitarian responsibility to make Covid-19 vaccines accessible for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, and encourage cooperation by the Palestinian Authority, heeding Pope Francis’ message that ‘in the face of a challenge that knows no borders, we cannot erect walls.’”

Models of Charity

The bishops, rightly, draw inspiration from the Church-run schools, clinics, hospitals and social projects serving the wider community:

“While many of our own countries continue to face severe hardship amid the pandemic, we have a profound responsibility to support our fellow Christians in the Holy Land. Church schools, clinics, hospitals and other social projects including the work of Caritas, while under severe pressure, are models of charity, justice, and peace. These Christian institutions are vital in bringing together people from many different backgrounds to serve the common good of all.”

Pilgrimages and Support

The communique concludes by looking to the future and a time when pilgrims can re-connect with

and support the “Living Stones” – the Christians of the Holy Land.

“The Christian community, though small, is an important guarantor of social cohesion and a bearer of hope for a better future. We eagerly await a time when Christians from across the world can once again make pilgrimages to the Holy Land to witness and support this first-hand. Until that point, we encourage our communities to provide any assistance that may be possible and hold all the region’s peoples in our prayers.”

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem supports the Church and Christian people across the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem – which includes Cyprus, Jordan and the Holy Land. Visit its [website](#) to support the work.

For the full text of the final communique of the 2021 Holy Land Co-ordination [see here](#).

Source: [Catholic Bishops Conference](#), England and Wales.