



Appeal by Christians and Jews for a Voice of Discernment and Peace

01.02.2026 | Declaration by Members of Jewish and Christian Communities

The following statement, drafted by a group of individuals committed to Jewish-Christian dialogue, issues a call for discernment and nuance in Christian discourse and analysis concerning the situation in Israel since October 7, 2023.

At the beginning of this new civil year, while the situation in Israel seems to be marking a pause—one that nevertheless remains troubling in many respects—it appears necessary to offer some reflections on the discourses and analyses that have circulated and continue to circulate about this conflict.

We, members of Jewish and Christian communities, living in Israel or elsewhere, express our deep distress and compassion in the face of the human suffering caused by the massacres of October 7, 2023, and by the violence that subsequently unfolded in the region, severely affecting both the Jewish and Palestinian populations. We condemn the indiscriminate terrorist violence targeting civilians—women and children—regardless of who the perpetrators are. Today, this suffering is further burdened by its use for ideological purposes that confuse and obstruct discernment. The fact that these narratives echo even in some Christian circles deeply concerns us and leads us to consider it necessary to speak out.

We speak with conscience, gravity, and responsibility. This suffering affects us, obliges us, and engages us morally. It calls for just words, but also for heightened vigilance in the way we speak, since any religious discourse can either open paths of healing or deepen wounds. It is precisely in the name of this moral responsibility that we cannot remain silent. Jewish and Christian traditions teach that truth demands humility—that is, the recognition of our limits, our blind spots, and our inability to grasp the full complexity of reality on our own.

We are particularly troubled by the repeated use of the term “genocide,” even within Christian circles and media, as a definitive accusation against Israel. Such a qualification engages both our moral conscience and our collective responsibility, and must be approached with rigor and discernment to prevent abuse or manipulation, protect the memory of genuine victims, and avoid trivializing the term in a way that would deprive victims of real protection. Prudence therefore requires not turning a serious accusation into absolute certainty, nor instrumentalizing it as if it were a simplistic, catchy slogan, for conflating moral indignation with legal classification undermines justice, the credibility of law, and religious discourse itself.

We are also alarmed when Zionism, the State of Israel, and, by extension, Jews in general, are portrayed as inherently colonial, racist, or criminal. Such an approach refuses to acknowledge the plurality of histories, experiences, and consciences. Similarly, within Israeli society, including among the country’s Christian communities, many see themselves as an integral part of Israel and fully participate in the life of the country. These often overlooked realities remind us that no people can be confined to a single voice or stance. For many of us, Jews and Christians connected to Israel, Zionism encompasses multiple, sometimes contradictory narratives, marked by exile, persecution, the Holocaust, the search for refuge, and also by diverse aspirations for security, justice, and peace. Reducing this plurality to a single ideology of evil denies complex human

trajectories and renders dialogue impossible.

It is essential to recall that the Catholic Church, through the Holy See, has explicitly recognized the historical and ancestral link of the Jewish people with the Land of Israel. This recognition is rooted in the declaration *Nostra Aetate* of the Second Vatican Council, which rejects any theology of substitution and affirms the permanence of the Jewish people in the history of salvation. Politically, it logically led to the diplomatic recognition of the State of Israel in 1993, constituting the political acknowledgment of the Jewish people's restored sovereignty over their land, proclaimed in 1948 and validated by the international community through its admission to the United Nations. Under the successive pontificates of John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis, the Holy See has reaffirmed that the Jewish people are not a foreign or colonial people on this land, but maintain a profound historical connection to it, distinct from any critical evaluation of the policies of a given government. Recalling this does not deny any injustice suffered by other populations but reflects discernment faithful to historical truth and the foundations of Judeo-Christian dialogue.

In examining current events, it is essential not to be carried away by the emotions stirred by images and reports, but to exercise careful discernment and maintain constant humility, without reducing human and historical complexity to a rigid binary of oppressors and the oppressed. Recognizing the complexity of the situation does not mean disengaging; rather, it requires rejecting any simplistic or reductive approach. Oversimplification freezes identities, stereotypes groups, and confines peoples to fixed roles. The truth on the ground is always multifaceted and nuanced. Charity, love, and compassion for all must guide our words and critique, ensuring the dignity of every population is defended without erasing anyone.

It is particularly important to avoid conflating distinct registers—material, political, historical, and theological—which operate according to different logics and can come into tension when speaking of the Land of Israel. The question cannot be reduced to deciding who was there first. The biblical narrative clearly emphasizes that the land of Canaan was inhabited by several peoples. Jewish and Christian traditions have never reduced the land to a purely material dimension. The land also carries spiritual, ethical, and symbolic meaning. For the Jewish people, the historical and physical dimension of their presence in Israel is real and documented. It is constitutive of their identity and of their vocation. Denying this reality paves the way for the denial of their rights and their ancestral bond with this land. When these registers are mixed without distinction or selectively truncated, religious traditions lose their capacity to contribute constructively to conflicts and their resolution.

It is also necessary to recall the long-standing presence in the region of other peoples and minorities — notably Druze, Bedouins, Samaritans, and other communities — who carry their own histories and have chosen to invest their future within the State of Israel. The silence surrounding these populations raises a serious moral question: are their rights, their voices, and their dignity considered negligible? This reality, without denying persistent injustices or idealizing policies, shows that the situation cannot be confined to a single narrative in which one actor embodies all rights and another all faults. Faithfulness to human dignity requires recognizing all communities, in their diversity, their rights, and their sufferings, without dissolving them into a reductive narrative that favors some identities over others.

We are troubled when moral asymmetry relativizes certain violence while absolutizing others, risking a hierarchy of victims. Every human life is sacred. Crimes committed against civilians, whoever they are and wherever they come from, must be named, condemned, and judged with the same moral clarity, without justification or relativization. The radicalization of narratives must be opposed. It is our ethical duty to weigh the concrete effects of the words we use. Speech that closes paths of dialogue rarely prepares the reconciliation it invokes, nor forgiveness.

We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the dignity and rights of all the populations in the region, recognizing that each people carries its own history, vocation, and responsibility. This

commitment leads us, in particular, to respect the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians, while affirming the right of the Jewish people to security and to the recognition of their historical and spiritual connection to this land. Refusing to choose between these commitments is not a position of convenience, but a moral and spiritual requirement. We believe that justice without truth becomes ideology, and that truth without love becomes violence.

In these dark times, we call on religious leaders and believers of conscience to assume greater responsibility. Our words can soothe or inflame, open paths or close them permanently. Faithful to our respective traditions, we choose to continue seeking together a word of truth carried by justice, tested by discernment, and supported by love, without which no true peace is possible. This is what the psalmist tells us:

"Love and Truth will meet ;
justice and peace will kiss.
Truth will spring from the earth ;
justice will look down from heaven" (Psalm 85:11–12).

May the new year bear fruit for the efforts of Israelis and Palestinians who have long worked for peaceful and constructive relations, and who, despite the deterioration of relations, continue with courage and faith. They deserve to be recognized, encouraged, and supported.

- **Father Louis-Marie Coudray**, Prior of the Benedictine Abbey of Notre-Dame de la Résurrection at Abu Ghosh.
- **Father Luc Cornuau**, Abbot of the Benedictine Abbey of La Pierre-qui-Vire.
- **Chief Rabbi David Rosen**, KSG, CBE, International Co-President of Religions for Peace.
- **Florence Taubmann**, ordained Protestant minister, United Protestant Church of France, member of the Shalom Salam association.
- **Prof. Dr. Christian M. Rutishauser**, SJ, Professor of Jewish Studies and Theology, University of Lucerne.
- **Dr. Thérèse Andrevon Gottstein**, Catholic Institute of Paris (ICP) and the Elijah Interfaith Institute.
- **Prof. Donizetti L. Ribeiro**, Assistant to the Superior General of the Brothers of Sion, based in Brazil.
- **Prof. Dr. Roberta Ascarelli**, President of the Federation of Jewish–Christian Friendships of Italy.
- **Prof. Jean-Dominique Durand**, President of the Jewish–Christian Friendship of France (AJCF).
- **Joël Thierry**, Secretary General of the Jewish–Christian Friendship of France (AJCF).
- **Prof. Marco Cassuto Morselli**, President Emeritus of the Federation of Jewish–Christian Friendships of Italy.
- **Prof. Dr. Gavin D’Costa**, Professor at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas; Emeritus Professor at the University of Bristol.
- **Rabbi Dr. Dov Maimon**, Senior Fellow at the Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI).
- **Yisca Harani**, Director of the Religious Freedom Data Centre.
- **Dr. Tobias Wallbrecher**, Member of the Ricordiamo Insieme Association.
- **Friederike Pesch Wallbrecher**, Member of the Ricordiamo Insieme Association.
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Source: Statement submitted by Dr. Thérèse Andrevon Gottstein on behalf of the editorial team. The text is available as a petition to be signed on the website change.org.