Heads of Churches on Gaza

02.01.2009

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We, the Patriarchs, Bishops and the Heads of Christian Churches in Jerusalem, follow with deep concern, regret, and shock the war currently raging in the Gaza Strip and the subsequent destruction, murder and bloodshed, especially at a time when we celebrate Christmas, the birth of the King of love and peace.

As we express our deep sorrow at the renewed cycle of violence between Israelis and Palestinians and the continued absence of peace in our Holy Land, we denounce the ongoing hostilities in the Gaza Strip and all forms of violence and killings from all parties. We believe that the continuation of this bloodshed and violence will not lead to peace and justice but breed more hatred and hostility - and thus continued confrontation between the two peoples.

Accordingly, we call upon all officials of both parties to the conflict to return to their senses and refrain from all violent acts, which only bring destruction and tragedy, and urge them instead to work to resolve their differences through peaceful and non-violent means.

We also call upon the international community to fulfill its responsibilities and intervene immediately and actively stop the bloodshed and end all forms of confrontation; to work hard and strong to put an end to the current confrontation and remove the causes of conflict between the two peoples; and to finally resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with a just and comprehensive solution based on international resolutions.

To the various Palestinian factions we say: It is time to end your division and settle your differences. We call on all factions at this particular time to put the interests of the Palestinian people above personal and factional interests and to move immediately toward national comprehensive reconciliation and use all non-violent means to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

Finally, we raise our prayers to the Child in the manger to inspire the authorities and decision makers on both sides, the Israelis and Palestinians, for immediate action to end the current tragic situation in the Gaza Strip. We pray for the victims, the wounded and the broken-hearted. May the Lord God Almighty grant all those who have lost loved ones consolation and patience. We pray for all those living in panic and fear, that God may bless them with calm, tranquility and true peace.

We call on all to observe next Sunday, January 4, as a day for justice and peace in the land of peace.

+ Patriarch Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate

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+ Patriarch Fuad Twal, Latin Patriarchate.

+ Patriarch Torkom II, Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Patriarchate.

Fr. Pier Battista Pizzaballa, ofm, Custody of the Holy Land

+ Anba Abraham, Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate.

+ Archbishop Swerios Malki Mourad, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate.

+ Abune Matthias, Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate

+ Archbishop Paul Nabil Sayyah, Maronite Patriarchal Exarchate.

+ Bishop Suheil Dawani, Episcopal Church of Jerusalem & the Middle East.

+ Bishop Munib Younan, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land.

+ Bishop Pierre Malki, Syrian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate

+ Bishop Youssef Zre"i, Greek Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate.

Fr. Raphael Minassian, Armenian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate

Jerusalem on 30 December 2008

Source: Hebrew Speaking Catholic Vicariate in Israel

See also: Rabbi Dow Marmur, Beware of well-meaning Hypocrisy

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