



PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF THE CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM

STATEMENT ON THE URGENT NEED TO CONCLUDE THE PRESENT WAR AND TURN FROM THE PURSUIT OF DEATH AND DESTRUCTION TOWARDS THE PROMOTION OF LIFE AND PEACE

26 August, 2024

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

Matthew 5:9

As we rapidly approach the twelfth month of the present devastating war, We, the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem, feel compelled to once again express our grave concerns over its dire direction. For despite repeated calls for the de-escalation of violence from ourselves and the international community, the situation in our beloved Holy Land has only continued to deteriorate.

Millions of refugees remain displaced, their homes inaccessible, destroyed, or beyond repair. Hundreds of innocents are weekly killed or severely wounded by indiscriminate attacks. Countless others continue to endure hunger, thirst, and infectious disease. Among these are those languishing in captivity on all sides, who additionally face the risk of ill-treatment from their captors. Still others, far from the battlefields, have suffered unchecked attacks against their villages, pastures, and farmlands.

Throughout this all, ceasefire negotiations have dragged on interminably, with the leaders of the warring parties seemingly more concerned with political considerations than bringing an end to the pursuit of death and destruction. These repeated delays, coupled with other provocative acts, have only served to heighten tensions to the point where we stand at the precipice of a full-blown regional war.

In view of these alarming developments, We, the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem, once again implore the leaders of the warring parties to heed our calls and those of the international community (UNSC Resolution 2735) to reach a rapid agreement for a ceasefire resulting in the end of the war, the release of all captives, the return of the displaced, the treatment of the sick and wounded, the relief of those who hunger and thirst, and the rebuilding of all public and private civilian structures that have been destroyed.

Just as importantly, we call upon the leaders of these peoples, in concert with the international community, to take up without delay diplomatic discussions addressing longstanding grievances between them, leading to concrete steps that promote a just and lasting peace in our region through the adoption of an internationally legitimate two-state solution.

While issuing these calls in the best interests of all who inhabit the region, we express our special concern for those Christian communities under our pastoral charge. These include those taking refuge in Gaza at St. Porphyrios Orthodox Church and Holy Family Catholic Church, as well as the courageous staff of al-Ahli Anglican Hospital and the patients under their care. We pledge to them our continued prayers and support both now and at the conclusion of the war, when we will labor together to rebuild and strengthen the Christian presence in Gaza, as well as throughout the Holy Land.

Finally, we appeal to Christians and all those of goodwill around the world to promote a vision of life and peace throughout our war-torn region, recalling Christ’s words, quoted above: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). During this time of extreme crisis, let us all recommit ourselves towards working and praying together in the hope that, by the grace of the Almighty, we might begin to realize this sacred vision of peace among all God’s children.

—The Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem