INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHRISTIANS IN THE HOLY LAND — LAMBETH PALACE.

Jerusalem 08th of August 2011, *Monday 18th and Tuesday 19th of July 2011.*

The Dean and Chapter of Westminsterwith the Archbishops of Canterbury and Westminster extended an invitation to his Beatitude Theophilos III, Patriarch of Jerusalem, to attend the International conference on Christians in theHoly Land. His Beatitude graciously nominated Ramzi Zananiri to attend the conference on behalf of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

The meetings were held at the **Lambeth Palace** which has been aLondon residence of Archbishops of Canterbury since the thirteenth century. It acts as home for the Archbishop of Canterbury and his family, as well as central office for the Archbishop's national and international ministry.

The **Guard Room** which has its origins as the Great Chamber in medieval times, this was where the Archbishop would receive honored guests, visiting dignitaries, and receive petitions from people from every walk of life, **hosted the 2 day conference on Christians in the Holy Land.**

The conference program covered the following milestones

 Introductions by the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams and the Archbishop of Westminster Vincent Nichols, followed by His Beatitude Patriarch

Fouad Twal and the Anglican Bishop inJerusalemSuheil Dawani;

■ Diverse youth voices were heard from a number of

Christians living in the Holy

Land in diverse circumstances;

- Reflections expressed from participants who maintain a close interest in the situation of Christians in the Holy Land, including Jewish and Muslim friends, living both in theHoly Landand in other parts of the world;
- A full plenary session engaged upon the current situation of the Christian communities in theHoly Land; in particular the most pressing challenges which they face? What are the implications for Christians in the West and for others including policy makers?
- Addresses by Lord Howell Minister of state at the foreign office, Cardinal Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue (representing the Holy See), John Dalli EU Commissioner (representing President Barosso) and László T_kés, Vice-President European Parliament.
- Highlights upon why the situation of Christians in theHoly Landraises issues of concern both in the immediate region, and further afield: issues that are of significance and legitimate concern to people of all faiths and political persuasions.
- What change can be expected in the coming period? What practical steps could be taken, especially by participants themselves and their networks, to help to improve the lives of ordinary Christians in theHoly Landand to counter the trend towards emigration? (Discussion in smaller groups followed by a plenary session in which feedback will be pooled and final conclusions reached).

The conference addressed the issues with their root causes rather than symptoms. It was obvious that the sponsors were very much concerned, committed and determined to making a difference and expressed a high sense of solidarity to Christians in theHoly Land.

Contextual challenges were highly visible throughout deliberations and reflections, with strong emphasis towards what change do we want to realize and HOW?

Although deliberations were cause oriented, with a strong exposure of the human face and sufferings endured throughout this long historic conflict, yet there were a great deal of emphasis towards sustaining Christian presence as a contribution to civil society that is pluralist, democratic and free where ALL can enjoy the fruits of peace for both people sharing the Holy Land for the three monotheistic faiths.

The conference broke out into eight working groups to discuss the WHAT and HOW can we be of help towards specific thematic approaches. Later the committees shared their input with the conference.

The forum natures of representation are very diverse and as individuals are very active and greatly structured, effective and highly influential. The conference has tremendous potentials that can be tapped upon and make a difference in peoples' lives, if properly invested in a strategic approach.

In my opinion there were diverse issues highlighted and some were very practical with concrete approaches that would result into immediate tangible results that can be realized.

The two day conference was excellently organized and program went like "Big Ben" and outcomes are very promising. The outcomes of the conference were entrusted in the hands of Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams and the Archbishop of Westminster Vincent Nichols. Unfortunately, no task force or follow-up committee was entrusted with the responsibility to put wheels on this very important engine.

Ramzi Zananiri