The Patriarchate of Jerusalem: Israeli Shelling of Orthodox Cultural Center Embodies Unjustifiable Targeting of Civilian Infrastructure in Gaza

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem issued a statement this morning, condemning the Israeli military's bombardment of the Orthodox Cultural Center in the Tel Al Hawa neighborhood of Gaza earlier today. In this statement, the Patriarchate emphasizes that this attack represents a stark embodiment of Israel's unwarranted determination to destroy the civil infrastructure and social service centers, as well as shelters for civilians trapped in the besieged enclave. The Patriarchate highlights that social, cultural, and sports centers have become vital providers of essential humanitarian services and safe havens for those affected by Israeli airstrikes targeting residential areas.

The Patriarchate further expressed that this assault on the Orthodox Cultural Center and its service facilities constitutes a direct and unjustified attack on one of the pillars of culture and social services in Gaza.

The Patriarchate also notes with grave concern that the Israeli military has targeted 19 places of worship, including mosques and churches, in Gaza during the past three weeks of the devastating conflict. Such attacks on civilians, particularly children, and the deliberate destruction of civilian infrastructure, cannot be justified on rational or humanitarian grounds and are fundamentally at odds with even

the most basic moral values.

The Patriarchate reiterates its firm demand for an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and pledges to continue its international efforts to achieve this goal as soon as possible.

"In times of crisis and adversity, we turn to the words of Psalms 34:18, which remind us that 'The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.' We pray for peace, justice, and a swift end to the suffering in Gaza," said the Patriarchate's statement.









REJECTION OF THE FALSE STATEMENTS BY "TV WITHOUT BORDERS"

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem categorically rejects the statements published by the media outlet https://tvxs.gr/ "tv without borders". The statements that ten Greek teachers and thirteen students of the Patriarchate's School of Zion in Jerusalem remain trapped in Jerusalem against their will, deprived of the right to travel to Greece is completely and utterly false and untrue.

In accordance with the program of the Ministry of Education of Greece, the school's teachers teach the foster students of the School, who are fully cared for by the Patriarchate with everything they need, are in the School out of their own free will, and may choose to leave and return to Greece at any time of their choice. The teachers and the foster students regularly communicate with their parents and their loved ones.

Regarding this issue and all other matters, arising from the current situation of hostilities that our beloved Holy Land is experiencing, the Patriarchate is in full communication and cooperation with the Greek Consulate General in Jerusalem.

From Secretariat-General

His Beatitude Theophilos III Holds A Memorial Service For The Gaza War Victims

Jerusalem
22 October 2023

This morning, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, H.B. Theophilos III, held a prayer and memorial service for the souls of the Gaza war victims, and the victims of the Israeli air strike that hit the St. Porphyrius Orthodox Church compound on Thursday, killing at least 18 people who had been seeking shelter in the church, which dates back to the 5th century, and is of at least 1616 years old.

"We appeal to you to awaken the longing for a peaceful life in all those who are filled with hatred for their neighbours, especially those now at war or preparing for war," the Patriarch said.

At least 450 people had been sheltering at the church complex in Gaza city when it was hit by an Israeli air strike.

The Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem issued a strongly worded statement on the attack.

"The survivors of this horrific bombing are resilient and filled with the spirit of Christ," the Patriarchate said. "Together with them we continue to display faith through the aftermath of this horrific ordeal. We have come together as a community to support one another, praying for healing and strength in the face of adversity."







JERUSALEM'S CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL LEADERS HOST THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY AND COLLECTIVELY CALL FOR RESTRAINT, DE-ESCALATION OF

VIOLENCE, AND PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS — STATEMENT



Jerusalem's Christian Spiritual Leaders Host the Archbishop of Canterbury and Collectively Call for Restraint, De-escalation of Violence, and Protection of Civilians

Jerusalem, October 21, 2023

"For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me." (Matthew 25:35-36)

We, the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem, having gathered in prayer with Jerusalem's honorable guest, the Most Reverend Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, join with him in expressing, in the strongest possible terms, our condemnation of the Israeli airstrikes that exploded without warning at the Orthodox Church compound of Saint Porphyrios in Gaza on the night of October 10th

These blasts led to the sudden and catastrophic collapse of two church halls around the scores of refugees, including women and children, sleeping within. Dozens found themselves instantly crushed beneath the rubble. Many were injured—some severely. At last count, eighteen have died, nine of whom were children.

In condemning this attack against a sacred place of refuge, we cannot ignore that this is but the latest instance of innocent civilians being injured or killed as a result of missile strikes against other shelters of last resort. Among these are schools and hospitals where refugees had fled because their homes were demolished in the relentless bombing campaign waged against residential areas in Gaza over the past two weeks.

Despite the devastation wrought upon our own and other social, religious, and humanitarian institutions, we, the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches, nevertheless remain fully committed to fulfilling our sacred and moral duty of offering assistance, support, and refuge to those civilians who come to us in such desperate need. Even in the face of ceaseless military demands to evacuate our charitable institutions and houses of worship, we will not abandon this Christian mission, for there is literally no other safe place for these innocents to turn.

As the above passage of Scripture reminds us, our Lord Jesus Christ calls us to minister to the most vulnerable. And we must do so not only in times of peace. The church must especially act as the church in times of war, for that is when human suffering is at its greatest.

Yet we cannot accomplish this mission alone. We therefore call upon the international community to immediately enforce protections in Gaza for Sanctuaries of Refuge, such as hospitals, schools, and houses of worship. And we call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire so that food, water, and vital medical supplies can safely be delivered to the relief agencies ministering to the hundreds of thousands of displaced civilians in Gaza, including those operated by our own churches.

Finally, we call upon all warring parties to de-escalate the violence, cease from indiscriminately targeting civilians on all sides, and operate within the international rules of warfare. Only in this way, we believe, can the groundwork be laid for an eventual diplomatic consideration of longstanding grievances so that a just and lasting peace can finally be achieved throughout our beloved Holy Land—both in our time, and for generations to come.

-The Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem

H.B. THEOPHILOS III WELCOMES ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY IN JERUSALEM AMIDST GAZA'S HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Jerusalem, The Holy Land

20 October 2023

His Beatitude Theophilos III, Patriarch of Jerusalem, welcomed this morning, The Most Reverend Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who has commenced a pastoral visit to Jerusalem, arriving at a critical moment marked by a severe humanitarian crisis in the wake of the Anglican Al-Ahli Hospital tragedy and last night's Israeli bombing of the Orthodox Church compound in Gaza City.

In a poignant display of Christian unity and compassion, His Beatitude welcomed Archbishop Justin to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and to the Holy Land at this time of war and humanitarian crisis.

These welcoming words were not mere pleasantries but a heartfelt acknowledgment of the interconnectedness of all Christians. Archbishop Justin's presence serves as a powerful symbol of shared Christian life during the pursuit of peace in turbulent times.

Amid the ongoing conflict, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Christian communities of the Holy Land have issued a joint call for an immediate ceasefire and a resolute commitment to the protection of all human lives.

The Israeli attack on the Orthodox monastery last night in Gaza emphasizes the urgent need to safeguard churches and their institutions, which often provide shelter to innocent civilians, including women and children who have lost their homes due to airstrikes. Such actions have raised pressing moral and international legal concerns about the sanctity of civilians and holy places during wartime.

Despite the grim circumstances of the ongoing war, the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the other Churches in the Holy Land remain resolute in their religious and moral duty to offer assistance, support, and refuge to those in need, even in the face of mounting pressures to evacuate these civilian sanctuaries.

In this dark hour, Patriarch Theophilos and Archbishop Justin join in fervent prayer, appealing to Almighty God for a swift end to hostilities and a renewed spirit of understanding and commitment towards a brighter future for all the inhabitants of the Holy Land, born from the crucible of this ongoing conflict.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem expresses profound gratitude to Archbishop Justin for his solidarity, emphasizing that, together, as unified members of the body of Christ, they can be a beacon of hope in a world yearning for peace.











THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM CONDEMNS ISRAELI AIRSTRIKES TARGETING HUMANITARIAN INSTITUTIONS IN GAZA

Jerusalem, October 19, 2023

The Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem expresses its strongest condemnation of the Israeli airstrike that have struck its church compound in the city of Gaza.

The Patriarchate emphasizes that targeting churches and their institutions, along with the shelters they provide to protect innocent citizens, especially children and women who have lost their homes due to Israeli airstrikes on residential areas over the past thirteen days, constitutes a war crime that cannot be ignored.

Despite the evident targeting of the facilities and shelters of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem and other churches — including the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem Hospital, other

schools, and social institutions — the Patriarchate, along with the other churches, remain committed to fulfilling its religious and moral duty in providing assistance, support, and refuge to those in need, amidst continuous Israeli demands to evacuate these institutions of civilians and the pressures exerted on the churches in this regard.

The Patriarchate stresses that it will not abandon its religious and humanitarian duty, rooted in its Christian values, to provide all that is necessary in times of war and peace alike.

MOURNING CIVILIAN VICTIMS OF THE MASSACRE IN GAZA AND EXTENDING SOLIDARITY TO THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF JERUSALEM — STATEMENT



MOURNING CIVILIAN VICTIMS OF THE MASSACRE IN GAZA AND EXTENDING SOLIDARITY TO THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF JERUSALEM

October 17, 2023-Jerusalem, The Holy Land

We, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, join together in profound solidarity with the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem as we bear witness to the criminal attack that unfolded within the precincts of the Al Ahli Anglican Episcopal Hospital in Gaza. This heart-wrenching crime occurred on a day when the Christian community had convened in earnest prayer, beseeching the heavens for peace, reconciliation, and the cessation of the war on Gaza.

Drawing inspiration from the enduring human spirit in the face of overwhelming adversity, we recall the verse from Psalm 34:18, "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." This spirit is embodied in the face of the horrifying shattering of a sanctuary of compassion and healing in Gaza, culminating in the tragic loss of hundreds of innocent lives.

In unyielding unity, we vehemently denounce this crime with our strongest condemnation. The initial reports of the Church hospital in Gaza tragedy have left us steeped in sorrow, for it represents a profound transgression against the very principles held by humanity. Hospitals, designated as sacred havens under international law, have been desecrated by Military Forces.

We unequivocally declare this atrocity as an egregious crime, one demanding the severest censure and international accountability. We implore the global community to embrace its sacred duty to shield civilians and to ensure that such heinous transgressions are never again permitted.

With heavy hearts, we acknowledge the profound loss of life at Al Ahli Anglican Episcopal Hospital. We hereby declare full solidarity with our brothers and sisters who have borne the unfathomable weight of this assault. As one united voice, we implore our friends, partners, and all people of goodwill to stand with us as we grieve the tragic results.

Our prayers and support remain steadfast, and our collective voices rise as an impassioned chorus, calling for justice, peace, and the cessation of the suffering that has descended upon the people of Gaza.

-The Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem

STATEMENT ON THE ESCALATING HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN GAZA



STATEMENT ON THE ESCALATING HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN GAZA Jerusalem, October 13, 2023

"God created mankind in his own image" (Gen 1,27)

Today, an emergency committee of the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem met for prayer and consultation over the grave humanitarian crisis that has befallen all of us.

Our beloved Holy Land has changed dramatically over the past week. We are witnessing a new cycle of violence with an unjustifiable attack against all civilians. Tensions continue to rise and more innocent and vulnerable people are paying the ultimate price as the dramatic level of death and destruction in Gaza clearly show.

The order to evacuate the north of Gaza and to ask 1.1 million people—including all the members of our Christian communities there—to relocate to the south within 24 hours will only deepen an already disastrous humanitarian catastrophe. Gaza's entire population is being deprived of electricity, water, fuel supplies, food, and medicine. According to UN sources, 423,000 people have already been displaced because of the destruction of their homes. Many civilians in Gaza have said to us that there are no realistic ways in which they can evacuate to safety in any direction.

We call upon the State of Israel, with the support of the International Community, to allow humanitarian supplies to enter Gaza so that the thousands of innocent civilians may receive medical treatment and basic supplies. Moreover, we call upon all parties to deescalate this war in order to save innocent lives while still serving the cause of justice.

Finally, in support of all those who have suffered in this war and of the families reeling from the violence, we call upon the people of our congregations and all those of goodwill around the world to observe a Day of Prayer and Fasting on Tuesday, October 17th.

There is yet time to stop the hatred.

-The Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem

THE PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM UNITE IN A CALL FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE AMIDST UNFOLDING VIOLENCE



THE PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM UNITE IN A CALL FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE AMIDST UNFOLDING VIOLENCE

JERUSALEM, October 7, 2023

The Holy Land, a place sacred to countless millions around the world, is currently mired in violence and suffering due to the prolonged political conflict and the lamentable absence of justice and respect for human rights. We, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, have time and again appealed for the importance of respecting the historic and legal Status Quo of the holy shrines. In these trying times, we come together to raise our voices in unity, echoing the divine message of peace and love for all humanity.

As custodians of the Christian faith, deeply rooted in the Holy Land, we stand in solidarity with the people of this region, who are enduring the devastating consequences of continued strife. Our faith, which is founded on the teachings of Jesus Christ, compels us to advocate for the cessation of all violent and military activities that bring harm to both Palestinian and Israeli civilians.

We unequivocally condemn any acts that target civilians, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, or faith. Such actions go against the fundamental principles of humanity and the teachings of Christ, who implored us to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31).

It is our fervent hope and prayer that all parties involved will heed this call for an immediate cessation of violence. We implore political leaders and authorities to engage in sincere dialogue, seeking lasting solutions that promote justice, peace, and reconciliation for the people of this land, who have endured the burdens of conflict for far too long.

In our capacity as spiritual leaders, we extend our hands to all those who suffer, and we pray that the Almighty may grant comfort to the afflicted, strength to the weary, and wisdom to those in positions of authority. We call upon the international community to redouble its efforts to mediate a just and lasting peace in the Holy Land, based on equal rights for all and on international legitimacy.

Let us remember the words of the Apostle Paul: "For God is not a God of disorder but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33). In the spirit of this divine message, we implore all to work tirelessly towards an end to violence and the establishment of a just and lasting peace that will allow the Holy Land to be a beacon of hope, faith, and love for all.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all during these challenging times.

—The Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem

PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM INITIATES MEDIATION AND DIALOGUE FOR HEALING IN UKRAINE AND RUSSIA

The Vatican, 29th September 2023

During his meeting with Pope Francis in the Vatican today, His Beatitude Theophilos III, Patriarch of Jerusalem, conveyed the Patriarchate of Jerusalem's commitment to mediation, fostering dialogue and healing in Ukraine and Russia. This initiative aims to address the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine and the threat of schism within the body of the Orthodox Church.

Acknowledging the profound pain, His Beatitude stated that the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, as the Mother of all the Churches, emphasises Christian unity and is deeply concerned about the Orthodox Churches worldwide. The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine and potential schism within the body of the Orthodox Church affects not only Orthodox Christians but the entire Christian world and people of goodwill.

The Patriarchate, rooted in centuries of reconciliation and peace efforts, offers a hand of goodwill and mediation to sisters and brothers in Ukraine and Russia. This initiative seeks to foster dialogue that may bring about an end to suffering and promote healing within the Orthodox family.

Recognising the challenges and deep divisions, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem is committed to the spiritual mission of dialogue and reconciliation. As Saint Paul wrote, "Christ is our peace," and the Patriarchate stands ready to assist in any way possible to help end conflict and suffering.

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