

**Appeal for a Just and lasting Peace in the Holy Land**  
19/10/2023

*"The angels of peace are weeping bitterly" (Isaiah 33:7)*

As fellow Shepherds we add our voices to those of our Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches of Jerusalem.

We care deeply for every human life, whether Israeli or Palestinian, created in the image and likeness of God. We weep for all victims and offer our deepest condolences to all who have been bereaved or injured.

In less than two weeks tragically more than 1,500 Israelis and 3,000 Palestinians have been killed, including over 1,000 children, as well as medical and UN personnel and journalists. We condemn unequivocally the indiscriminate killing of all civilians both Israelis and Palestinians.

We equally condemn the blockade against humanitarian supplies, the impeding of medical services, and the denial of water, food and shelter to two million displaced people in Gaza. This is collective punishment, which, together with the targeting of civilians, are war crimes in international law and the perpetrators must be held accountable.

Hundreds of families sought refuge in the Ahli Anglican Hospital in Gaza. Instead of protection and safety, hundreds have been killed and many more injured. It is the biggest loss of life in Gaza since 2007. And yet according to the World Health Organization there have been over 115 attacks on healthcare facilities by Israel in Gaza in the last two weeks.

What is happening in Gaza and the Palestinian Territories is not a military operation but a full-scale assault against the Palestinian people. There is no justification for yet another Nakba. We appeal to the UN and international community and those who consider themselves friends of Israel and Palestine, to use your influence to stop the ethnic cleansing, implement the rule of international law and uphold the fundamental human rights of Palestinians as well as Israelis, to live as equals with justice, dignity and security in their historic lands.

We ask God to open hearts and minds, so that we see the humanity in one another. Let us all be taught by God Almighty that justice, peace, and reconciliation are his perfect will for all then indeed God's land may indeed become a holy land, in which all will praise God and live in harmony with one another.

*"God will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (Revelation 21:4)*

+ Michel Sabbah, patr em. + Riah Abo El Assal + Moneb Yonan + Atallah Hanna