

A Jerusalem Voice for Justice

an ecumenical witness for equality and a just peace in Palestine/Israel

Jerusalem, 20.12.2025

A Christmas Message - 2025

The cities of the Holy Land are adorned with lights and trees during this Christmas season, and markets and festivals abound, spreading a festive atmosphere. Many of us participate in these gatherings, as if we are thirsting for life after witnessing death and destruction over the past two years. Joy radiates from the faces of children and adults alike, in the carols and hymns, and in the markets and gifts.

We must ask: How can we celebrate while our people in Gaza are still suffering the effects of war, destruction, genocide and now face a harsh, rainy winter? Many are exposed to the elements, trying to survive without the most basic necessities. People are still dying: killed by the Israeli army, dying of starvation, disease and exposure to the cold.

How can we celebrate when, in the West Bank, terror reigns as the army imposes its regime of assassinations, mass arrests, house demolitions, land confiscation, while the settlers continue their rampage? Among those suffering under this regime of terror are our Christian brothers and sisters in Taybeh and Abboud. Their villages, like so many others, are attacked, their fields pillaged and their ancient churches desecrated.

We ask ourselves: How can we celebrate? Yet, celebrate we must!

We might indeed be powerless in the face of Israeli intransigence, which prevents life from entering Gaza, preventing law enforcement in the West Bank. However, the message from Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Jerusalem is that equality must come, injustice must end and light must triumph. Our Christmas celebration proclaims a message of life in the face of death and darkness.

Our celebrations are filled with Christmas carols and messages of hope, raised by faithful and pastors from the depths of our hearts, offering us a glimmer of hope after the horrors of the past two years. We revive hope by reliving the memory of Christmas, the birth of the Prince of Peace. Christmas is a holiday for everyone; it is a prayer, a celebration of humanity, and also a national holiday.

Some may ask: Have the celebrations and events become excessive? Have they burdened families already struggling with difficult economic circumstances? However, the number of participants in these celebrations gives the impression that they enrich the Christmas season, revitalize the economy, and bring joy and hope back to families who have waited so long.

This Christmas, we want to celebrate, but we continue, at the same time, to remain committed to our mission and our peaceful resistance, striving for equality, freedom, justice, and peace. Our hope is the hope of the shepherds at the coming of Christ. The angel told them: *"I am bringing you*

good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.” (Luke 2:10-11).

We rejoice and we celebrate, but with awareness and caution, for we are exposed every day to the danger of death and war in Gaza and throughout Palestine. We celebrate with our souls burdened by death in our land. Even in the heart of our city, Jerusalem, the City of God, at its so-called New Gate, there are attempts to deprive us of the serenity and sanctity of our feast, especially the municipality’s policy aimed at Judaizing the city and undermining the status quo that guarantees pluralism and the unique character of this neighborhood and the city as a whole.

Despite all this, we celebrate with our hearts lifted up to the sublimity of God, filled with the joy of the coming of the eternal Word of God, who became man and dwelt among us, our Savior and the Savior of all humanity. Through Him, we are free, witnesses and messengers of the message of love in our beloved Holy Land. Glory to God in the highest, and on all our land, peace from God, love, justice, and equality. Happy Feast!

Signatories:

Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Michel Sabbah (emeritus)

Greek Orthodox Archbishop Attallah Hanna

Lutheran Bishop of the Holy Land Munib Younan (emeritus)

Mr. Yusef Daher

Ms. Sawsan Bitar

Mr. Samuel Munayer

Ms. Dina Nasser

Mr. John Munayer

Ms. Sandra Khoury

Rev. David Neuhaus SJ

Rev. Frans Bouwen MAfr

Rev. Firas Abdrabbo

Mr. Rafi Ghattas

Rev. Alessandro Barchi

and other members