

Holy Land Coordination 2022

Final Communiqué

'If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand wither'
Psalm 137:5

Jerusalem is a Jewish city, a Christian city, a Muslim city. It must remain a common patrimony and never become the exclusive monopoly of any one religion. We came to meet and pray with our sisters and brothers, mindful of Patriarch Pizzaballa's message that it is our right and duty as Christians to uphold the city's openness and universality.

The Christian community is essential to Jerusalem's identity, both now and for the future. Yet its continued presence is threatened by occupation and injustice. Many of those we encountered are facing violence and intimidation by settler groups, restrictions on their freedom of movement, or separation from their families because of the status they are assigned.

We share the concerns expressed by the Christian community about unilateral restrictions on freedom of worship during Easter, imposed by the Israeli police. We experienced the deep sorrow and anger felt by local Christians at the killing of Palestinian Catholic journalist Shireen Abu Akleh and the shameful attack on mourners at her funeral.

We witnessed how many people of all backgrounds are living in poverty, which has been compounded by the pandemic. The absence of pilgrims during the past two years has devastated livelihoods, including among Jerusalem's Christian community, leaving some families struggling to afford housing, food, or other essentials.

Amid these challenges, there are nevertheless signs of hope. We visited Christian organisations taking responsibility for the wellbeing of their community and wider society. They are working tirelessly to

alleviate hardship and improve lives. We met young people who, despite facing daily violations of their fundamental human rights, refuse to be the last generation of Christians in the city.

As pilgrims return once more, we call upon them to support Christians in Jerusalem and throughout the Holy Land. It is essential that all pilgrims understand and engage with the reality of life for the Christian community here. A true Holy Land pilgrimage should be a journey of faith, encounter, and solidarity.

Pope Francis affirms the universal value of Jerusalem, which goes beyond any consideration of territorial issues.¹ Inspired by Christ our Peace, all Christians must help preserve the city's sacred character and promote an authentic vision for Jerusalem as a place of dialogue and unity.

Jerusalem

26 May 2022

Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord

Bishop Declan Lang

England and Wales (Chair of the Holy Land Coordination)

Bishop Udo Bentz

Germany

Bishop Peter Bürcher

Nordic and Swiss Bishops' Conference

Bishop Nicholas Hudson

Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union

Bishop Alan McGuckian

Ireland

¹ Letter sent by the Holy Father to the Grand Imam of al-Azhar on the occasion of the International Conference in Support of Jerusalem (January 2018)

Archbishop William Nolan

Scotland