

EMBARGO: Thursday, 22 January 2026, 11am (Jerusalem, GMT+2)

Final Communiqué of the Co-ordination of Episcopal Conferences in Support of the Church of the Holy Land

17 – 21 January 2026

"You are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world" Matthew 5:13.14

Our pilgrimage was to a Land where people are suffering trauma. We began with a visit to Bedouin communities living on the margins of society in the Occupied West Bank. They shared their experiences of a life on the periphery, being observed but often not encountered, their movement heavily restricted by rapidly expanding settlements encircling them on the surrounding hills.

We heard stories about Israeli settler attacks and their continual violence and intimidation, theft of livestock and demolition of property, leaving many unable to sleep at night for fear of further violence. When we asked them who sees their struggles and their cry to live in peace with their neighbours, they replied: "Nobody sees us."

Our journey continued with Mass in the only completely Christian town in Palestine. They, too, told us of their suffering: endless attacks from extremist settlers, uprooting of their olive trees, the seizure of their land and intimidatory acts that make their daily life unbearable, driving many into mass emigration.

In the twelve months since our last visit, the Land of Promise is being diminished and challenged. Gaza remains a catastrophic humanitarian crisis. The people of the West Bank we encountered are demoralised and fearful. The courageous Israeli voices which speak out for human and civil rights are increasingly threatened; advocating for marginalised voices is a costly solidarity. We fear that soon, they too will be silenced.

As Christians, it is our calling and duty to give a voice to the voiceless, and to bear witness to their dignity, so that the world may know their suffering and be moved to advocate for justice and compassion.

The settlements in the West Bank, illegal under international law, continue to expand by commandeering the land of others. The universality of human rights applies to all without exception. Instead, it is relentlessly replaced by a system where dignity and protection depend on one's civil status.

We affirm Israel's right to exist and for Israelis to live in peace and security; equally, we call for these same rights to be upheld for all those rooted in this land. We hope that efforts for peace will prevail over violence, and that there will be no more acts of terrorism and war. We also urge our governments to exert pressure on Israel to uphold the rules-based international order and to revive meaningful negotiations toward a two-state solution for the benefit and security of all.

We were deeply moved by the faith and steadfastness of local Christians and also by people of other faiths who work to sustain the hope of their communities. They remind us that it is our shared vocation to be “salt of the earth” and “light of the world” and to strive for peaceful coexistence and security across the Holy Land.

We also witnessed the courage of those Jewish and Palestinian voices who, despite immense challenges and their own trauma, continue to advocate for justice, dialogue and reconciliation. Hearing from parents who have lost a child to conflict and can still find a way to forgive, offers a powerful witness to the possibility of peace and reconciliation. Few experiences are more devastating. When such a mother or father pleads for an end to violence, the world must listen - and act.

The people of the Holy Land cry out for our help and prayers; they long for an end to their suffering. Stand with them. Recognise their plea for dignity. Help foster genuine dialogue between communities. Heed the call of Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, to come on pilgrimage as a sign of our love, support and solidarity with them.

As we leave this Land, we do so with our hearts full of compassion for those who are suffering and inspired by those who, by their pursuit of justice, keep the hope of peace alive.

Our Lady Queen of Palestine and of all the Holy Land, pray for us.

Rt Rev Nicholas Hudson

Bishop of Plymouth

Moderator of the Holy Land Coordination

Chair of the International Affairs Department, Bishops' Conference

England and Wales

Rt Rev Nicolo Anselmi

Bishop of Rimini

Italy

Most Rev Udo Bentz

Archbishop of Paderborn

Germany

Rt Rev Peter Burcher

Bishop Emeritus of Reykjavik

Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland

Rt Rev James Curry

Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster.

International Affairs Department, Bishops' Conference.

England and Wales

Rt Rev Paul Dempsey

Auxiliary Bishop of Dublin

Ireland

Rt Rev Michel Dubost C.I.M.

Bishop Emeritus of Evry-Corbeil-Essonnes.

France

Most Rev Antoine Herouard

Archbishop of Dijon

Co-President of Justice & Peace, Europe

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Rt Rev Joseph Kopacz

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Most Rev William Nolan

Archbishop of Glasgow

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Rt Rev Christian Rodembourg M.S.A.

Bishop of Saint-Hyacinthe

Canada

Most Rev Joan Enric Vives Sicilia

Bishop Emeritus of Urgell

Spain

Rt Rev Abdallah Elias Zaidan

Bishop of the Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon

Chair of the Committee on International Justice and Peace, Bishops' Conference

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