

A Jerusalem Voice for Justice

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

Jerusalem, May 10, 2025

Your Holiness,

We, the Jerusalem Voice for Justice, are members of an ecumenical group of Christians in Jerusalem, Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants. It was with great joy that we watched you walk onto the balcony of St. Peter's and greet the world as the new Pope! We were especially moved by the new name you have chosen: Pope Leo XIV. We pray that you will continue Pope Leo XIII's legacy of social justice, speaking out for the poor and the marginalized, for workers and the sick, and especially those who are suffering. Your reminder that "God loves us, all of us, evil will not prevail" gives us courage we deeply need.

We, together with our Muslim compatriots and Jews engaged in the struggle for justice too, are devastated by the suffering that engulfs our people. More than fifty thousand Palestinians have been killed in Gaza over the last year and a half, and millions of others are facing imminent famine. The Palestinians in Gaza are dwindling, threatened with permanent displacement. The assault on Palestinians in the northern West Bank proceeds almost unnoticed. Besieged, many are without work, sinking into despair. Meanwhile thousands of Palestinians are detained without trial. The pilgrims, who give us some consolation, are almost entirely absent from our towns. Israelis have also died and others remain hostages as their government commits again and again to endless war.

Christian Palestinians in the Holy Land are facing an unprecedented crisis. We cherish our vocation to be faithful witnesses to Jesus Christ, His life, death and resurrection, from the beginnings until today, in the land where the Gospel was preached by Jesus and from where it spread all around the world. We intend to remain living stones that give life to the Holy Places visited by the pilgrims in view of renewing their faith. However, after years of war and migration, we fear for the survival of our Christian communities in the very land which is Jesus's homeland. The character of Jerusalem, our Holy City, is being changed as Christians and Muslims are increasingly kept out and our heritage in the city is progressively expropriated. No Palestinians means no indigenous Christians; no Christians means no Church, even if the monuments remain.

We deeply mourn our friend Pope Francis. He walked with us, never afraid to speak out. And now we come to you, asking for your friendship and closeness. There is a parish in Gaza that received a daily phone call; they wait to hear from you. Please walk with us and give us strength. We need the clarity you can bring to our struggle for equality, justice, and peace in our land. We seek your support in our struggle to safeguard the Christian presence throughout the Holy Land. We look to you for inspiration in ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue, which we cannot survive without. Most of all, we count on you to speak out when the world is silent. We know that your words will be a witness of God's love, to the fact that all of us are made in God's divine image, and that every human life is equally precious.

We are praying for you. We await you. Please pray for us!

In Christ,

Jerusalem Voice for Justice members include:

His Beatitude Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Michel Sabbah (emeritus)

His Grace Lutheran Bishop of the Holy Land Munib Younan (emeritus)

His Excellency Greek Orthodox Bishop Attallah Hanna

Mr. Yusef Daher

Ms. Sawsan Bitar

Ms. Dina Nasser

Ms. Sandra Khoury

Mr. Sami El-Yousef

Mr. John Munayer

Mr. Samuel Munayer

Mr. Rafi Ghattas

Rev. Frans Bouwen MAfr

Rev. Alessandro Barchi

Rev. Firas Abd Rabbo

Rev. David Neuhaus SJ