

## PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF LOCAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM

### STOP ALL THE VIOLENCE, PURSUE A JUST PEACE

*"Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands at a distance; for truth stumbles in the public square, and uprightness cannot enter. Truth is lacking, and whoever turns from evil is despoiled. The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, and was appalled that there was no one to intervene". (Isaiah 59: 14 – 16)*

The violence and aggression of this present moment is without proportion or justification.

An Israeli soldier was taken prisoner in a combat. A Jewish settler was kidnapped and killed. As Israeli response, three bridges were destroyed and a power substation was disabled causing tens of millions of dollars of damage and leaving up to 750,000 people without electricity or water in Gaza. Moreover, the Israeli forces have abducted 84 persons, among them 7 Cabinet Ministers and 21 members of the Palestinian Legislative Council. This comes after a week in which 48 Palestinians were killed and among the dead were 27 innocent civilians, including nine children and a pregnant woman.

To-day, we Christian heads of the Churches in Jerusalem, we say: it is against law and reason what is still happening in our land. It is our duty as religious leaders to keep saying this to our Authorities. It is against law and reason that you remain and you keep us on the ways of death. *"The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, and was appalled that there was no one to intervene. (Isaiah 59: 16)*

We condemn the abduction of the Israeli soldier, the killing of the settler youth, as we condemn the daily abduction and killing of tens of Palestinians as well as the keeping of thousands of them in prisons. All human beings, Israelis and Palestinians, have the same dignity and must be equally treated. All aggression against human dignity, whether Israeli or Palestinian, must stop.

Our sufferings, Israelis and Palestinians, will have an end when the truth on both sides is recognized. The right for Israel to have security must be recognized. At the same time, must be recognized that the core of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is the deprivation of the Palestinian people of his freedom. We firmly support fighting against terrorism, but we remind firmly that this fighting starts by eradicating the roots of all violence, which is the deprivation of the Palestinian people of his freedom.

It is against law and reason to keep going in the way of death. The moral imperative is clear. Stop all the violence. Stop the killing. Protect the life and dignity of the people. Begin negotiations. Break this murderous chain of violence in which we are ensnared. And listen to God's call : *"Depart from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it " (Psalm 33:15)*

Things have gone too far. We call on the International community to intervene and insist on a diplomatic solution to this conflict. All Authorities must change course, and with unflinching International pressure and presence, they have to negotiate in order to reach the just and definitive peace. *" What does the Lord require of you...To do Justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).*

Jerusalem, July 7<sup>th</sup> 2006

**Patriarch Theophilos III**

Greek Orthodox Patriarchate

**Patriarch Michel Sabbah**

R.C. Latin Patriarchate

**Patriarch Torkom II**

Armenian Apostolic

Orthodox Patriarchate

**Pier-Battista Pizzaballa**

Custos of the Holy Land

**Anba Abraham**

Coptic Orthodox

**Swerios Malki Mourad**

Syrian Orthodox

**Abune Grima**

Ethiopian Orthodox

**Paul Nabil Sayyah**

Maronite Patriarchal

Exarchate

**Riah Abu Al-Assal**

Episcopal Church of

Jerusalem & the

Middle East

**Mounib Younan**

Evangelical Lutheran

Church in Jordan

& the Holy Land

**Pierre Malki**

Syrian Catholic

Patriarchal Exarchate

**George Bakar**

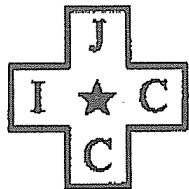
Greek Catholic

Patriarchal Exarchate

**Raphael Minassian**

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Patriarchal Exarchate

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- + *Bishop Mounib Younan*: Lutheran Evangelical Church.
- + *Pierre Malki*: Exarch for the Syrian Catholics - Jerusalem
- + *George Bakar*: Greek Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate
- Rev Rafael Minassian*: Armenian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate.