Oct. 21st 2024

Your Beatitudes,

The Higher Presidential Committee for Church Affairs in Palestine extends its warmest greetings. We write to share a grave and urgent matter regarding the situation in Gaza, where the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe has reached unprecedented levels. The Palestinian people in the northern Gaza Strip are enduring unbearable suffering, trapped in a living nightmare created by the ongoing Israeli aggression. The assault has now entered its third phase, compounding the devastation of a relentless year-long campaign of extermination and forced displacement.

Approximately three weeks ago, Israeli occupation authorities intensified their campaign, enforcing the mass displacement of the entire northern Gaza population. Families were forced to flee south under a plan aimed at ethnically cleansing the area. The situation in Jabalia, Jabalia Refugee Camp, Beit Hanoun, and Beit Lahia is dire, placed under tight siege, with the relentless airstrikes, tank shelling, and the use of explosive barrels and booby-trapped drones. Vital infrastructure, including water wells and bakeries, has been destroyed, shelters have been targeted and set ablaze, including the recent attack on Abu Hussein School in Jabalia Refugee Camp, and entire residential blocks have been obliterated, such as the recent massacre in Beit Lahia, resulting in nearly 73 casualties, most of whom children and women.

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The human toll is staggering. In just two weeks, 540 Palestinians have been killed, the vast majority of whom are women and children. Hospitals have been systematically targeted, including the Indonesian, Al-Awda, Kamal Adwan, and Al-Yaman hospitals, have been forced out of operation due to sustained attacks and the blocking of life-saving supplies.

The atrocities extend far beyond healthcare. The Israeli occupation has cut off humanitarian assistance, food supplies, and other critical resources to approximately 350,000 people still trapped in northern Gaza. They are now being coerced into joining an already overcrowded southern region, where nearly 1.5 million displaced persons are crammed into just 15% of Gaza's territory.

Your Beatitudes,

This tragedy has unfolded over the course of more than a year, during which the Palestinian people in Gaza have endured relentless killings, extermination, destruction, starvation, and displacement. Gaza has become not only a graveyard for the Palestinian people and human conscience but also a testament to the collapse of international humanitarian law and human rights principles. The toll has reached over 42,000 lives lost, with more than 10,000 people still buried beneath the rubble, and 100,000 others wounded, the majority being women and children. UNICEF estimates indicate that one million children in Gaza are living in hell on earth. What further evidence does the world need to act, to fulfill its moral, legal, and political obligations, and to implement resolutions that recognize no distinctions based on race or gender?

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We must not forget the heinous Israeli attacks. On October 19, 2023, the Saint Porphyrios Orthodox Church was targeted, resulting in the killing of 17 Palestinian Christians, including nine children. The Latin Holy Family Church was also struck in December, claiming the lives of a mother and her daughter. Over 20 people have been wounded in attacks on churches, with some suffering severe wounds. Many others, such as Mrs. Elham Farah, died outside the church grounds, while others succumbed to the lack of medicine and healthcare, like Hani Abu Dawood and young Lara Al-Sayegh.

Even church institutions have not been immune to this devastation. The Arab Evangelical Hospital (Baptist), affiliated with the Episcopal Anglican Church, and the Holy Family School have come under horrific attack. The Orthodox Cultural Center has been completely razed, while the Rosary Sisters School and YMCA have sustained partial destruction.

The suffering of Christian Palestinians continues unabated, as essential supplies, food, and healthcare remain scarce. Many individuals are in urgent need of medical care for chronic conditions, yet healthcare resources are virtually nonexistent.

Your Beatitudes,

We turn to you as moral leaders, with a profound sense of urgency, to leverage your influence and press your governments to take decisive action. It is imperative to halt this systematic disaster and compel Israel to end its ongoing acts of genocide. Thousands of Palestinians are displaced, fleeing the specter of death, while countless others live in fear

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without shelter, food, water, or basic medical care due to the relentless siege and bombardment. This cruelty is aimed at forcibly uprooting them from their homes.

We call on you to unite and intensify your efforts to defend Palestinian lives, whose dignity and very existence are under threat by Israeli policies of extermination, starvation, destruction and displacement. Your advocacy for justice and humanity is not only a defense of Palestinian rights but also a stand for the universal values that we must pass on to future generations.

We urge you, as you stand for justice, to support efforts to lift the oppression, enforce a ceasefire, end the occupation, and hold perpetrators accountable. This aligns with the United Nations General Assembly resolutions, International Court of Justice rulings, and the arrest warrants issued by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

Your Beatitudes,

We appeal to your shared sense of humanity. The time is now to act decisively to stop the genocide of the Palestinian people in Gaza—through starvation, thirst, violence, siege, and fear. Stand against the injustices, and confront the double standards and discrimination against Palestinian victims. The horrors faced by the Palestinian people are beyond words.

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Your Beatitudes,

We, the people of Palestine—Muslims and Christians alike—yearn for an end to our long-standing suffering. We aspire to live in peace, with dignity and freedom, in an independent State of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital, as called for by international resolutions. The path to peace is clear: the occupation must end. There can be no lasting and true peace and security without justice.

With profound respect and appreciation,

Dr. Ramzi Khouri
Member of the PLO Executive Committee
Head of the Higher Presidential Committee for Churches Affairs in Palestine

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