



A Letter from Pax Christi International to the Christian Communities in the land of the Holy One.

To Our Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We, the Pax Christi International community, write today to express our deep and abiding commitment to stand in solidarity with you, the faithful Christian communities of the Holy Land. We offer our hands and hearts in support of your struggle to achieve a just and lasting peace. And, of course, we pray that you continue to find strength and encouragement during these most difficult days.

At this critical moment, when the world's attention is understandably consumed by the Covid-19 pandemic, we have not lost sight that you are facing another equally formidable challenge - the possibility of de jure annexation and the on-going military occupation (a de facto annexation) of Palestinian land and resources by Israel. We remain cognisant that the virus has put an enormous strain on your already struggling economy, shrinking what job opportunities existed and causing so many to have to rely on international aid. We know that both the devastating realities of the pandemic and the structural oppression of the occupation pose a dire threat to your well-being and lives.

While Pax Christi International has issued several formal statements regarding the situation in Israel Palestine ¹ including our 19th June 2020 strong objection ² to any unilateral plans for annexation, we felt an urgency to reach out in a more personal way to you, our Christian sisters and brothers.

We are in awe of your resilience and determination; yet recognise how the many painful years of displacement and occupation have engendered feelings of disillusionment and fear. As the Christian population dwindles, your expressions of worry and alarm, for the future existence of the Palestinian Christian community in the Holy Land, should be our wake-up call. We, the international community, must hear your desperation and answer your cry for hope.

You are the seeds of Christianity, part of the "mother church". It is from your very being in this land that our Christian faith has flourished and spread. From every corner of the globe, your fellow Christians look to you as the living stones, the bedrock of our faith born more than 2000 years ago in a small Palestinian village.

You remain guardians of our faith and protectors of the sites we hold most sacred. By your vigilant witness a strong Christian presence throughout the Holy Land is ensured. This is especially important

¹ https://paxchristi.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/190905_pci_statement_for_wwppi_2019.pdf

² <https://paxchristi.net/2020/06/19/pax-christi-international-opposes-israels-plans-for-annexation>



in the holy city of Jerusalem which is, and must always remain, a universal city of hope and peace, a place of “reconciliation, justice and equality”³ for all.

Christians, although numerically a minority in Israel and Palestine, have always been a pillar, and integral part, of society. Today, your presence and voice in the Holy Land has never been more crucial.

Within the political cacophony, you have a critical role to play as prophetic leaders. To speak out on behalf of all God’s children and call for policies which promote the human dignity and equal rights of all. To seek peace, always with the common good of all persons of the Holy Land in mind.

We know that so many of you have risen to the challenge and have been a clarion voice, undaunted in your belief that there are ways to create a new reality based on justice and mutual respect. You, our sisters and brothers, embody the very concept of Sumud, a steadfast and nonviolent resilience. Your faith and hope are a great testimony for all of us, a powerful invitation to meet the challenges that affect our world with clear-sighted determination based on the Christian tenets of love and peace. To “raise the head”⁴ above the fray and be agents in the unfolding of God’s plan, always hopeful of a better future.

As Christians, through our belief in the resurrection of Christ, we know that there is always hope and that struggle, misery and even death will not be the last word. We hold on to hope; hope in God, in the power of love and in the glimmers of goodness that we know reside within each of God’s children.

It is in our churches, parishes and faith communities that this hope, regardless of how fragile, is fortified. It is in these communal spaces that we forge bonds that sustain us in the darkest of times. It is where we show support for one another and together deepen our commitment to bring forth a better world. We ask you: how best can we be your partners in keeping hope alive?

We all share in the calling to be “givers of hope”. To encourage and constantly remind one another that despair is our greatest enemy. Hope, like love and forgiveness, is central to our Christian belief and being. It is the opposite of resignation or surrender. Hope gives us the confidence to move forward, to believe in the possibility of a future in which our deepest longings can be realised. With hope, we are able to move closer to others without fear, acknowledging both our differences and shared humanity. It is the catalyst that urges us to act.

Dear friends, be assured that:

- we will continue to encourage the worldwide network and partners of Pax Christi International to remain engaged as advocates for justice and peace in the Holy Land;
- we will continue to make clear our position that the dignity, human rights, security and right to self-determination must be protected equally for Palestinians and Israelis and that all parties must adhere to international and humanitarian law or be held accountable;

³ <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2020-06/church-and-political-leaders-express-concern-over-israels-annex.html>

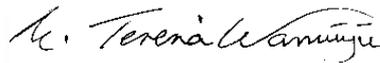
⁴ <https://biblehub.com/luke/21-28.html>

- we will, at every opportunity, lift up your call for “all churches, governments, and people of good will to act and put an end to this tragedy” ⁵;
- we will use our voice to strongly urge the international community to pursue all avenues of diplomacy for a just peace, to recognise the State of Palestine as the Vatican did in 2015 ⁶, and to impose meaningful consequences when there is any breach of international law;
- we will remain constant in our solidarity and commitment to be in communion with all Christians of the Holy Land offering our support and encouragement;
- we will listen to you and respond with actions and words so that you know you are not alone or forgotten and
- we promise to keep each and every one of you in our prayers asking for God’s intercession to sustain and embolden your courage and hope.

In peace and solidarity,



Bishop Marc Stenger
France
Co-President



Sr Teresia Wamuyu Wachira (IBVM)
Kenya
Co-President



Ms Greet Vanaerschot
Belgium
Secretary General

Brussels, 12 August 2020

⁵ <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2020-06/church-and-political-leaders-express-concern-over-israels-annex.html>

⁶ <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/vatican-signs-treaty-state-palestine-calls-two-state-solution>