



To Bishop Dr. Sami Ibrahim Azar and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land on the occasion of the visit of solidarity in Jerusalem on February 13th -14th 2024 by Bishop Marianne Christiansen and Professor Peter Lodberg from the Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark

Following the meeting of the Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, which met in Vejle, Denmark on the 2nd February 2024, we would like to express our compassion with all the victims of terror and war in Gaza and in Israel.

Especially, we acknowledge the clear message given by Bishop Azar and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land about solidarity with all victims and the Palestinian people. We would also like to thank you for your warm hospitality during our visit.

The information we have received from our sister churches in the Middle East, as well as our international ecclesiastical networks, on how violence is affecting innocent civilians has touched us deeply. We cannot help but be moved by the stories of how people have experienced violence, suffering and death in the region over the last four months. In contrast to the terror and retribution, we as churches are called to heed our ecumenical call and follow Christ's teaching of peace and protection of the most vulnerable.

Together with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and other churches in Palestine and Israel, we appeal for the terror and violence to end. Our churches will continue to pray with one voice for justice and peace:

- We condemn the attacks on civilian targets, both the terrorist attacks by Hamas and the revenge bombing of homes and destruction of civilian infrastructure in Gaza by Israel.
- We call for a ceasefire and for all parties in the conflict to adhere to international humanitarian law and to minimize civilian casualties.
- We call for the immediate release of all hostages.
- We call for humanitarian assistance to the huge number of civilians now experiencing a humanitarian, and man-made, catastrophe in Gaza.
- We are concerned with the reports of increasing numbers of Palestinians killed in the West Bank by inhabitants in settlements which are illegal under international law.
- We call for Israeli Government to protect the population of all the occupied territories, securing the safety of everyone without discrimination.

From our point of view the current crises must lead to a renewed effort to create a just peace for all in Palestine and Israel, with full political and civil rights to all people according to international law. Despite numerous previous attempts, a lasting and fair agreement has not been reached in the past eight decades. We call for renewed international and national political initiatives and support for local churches and religious communities that work for a just peace for all.

We hope and pray that violence, suffering, and death will not steal the hope of our Christian sisters and brothers in the Holy Land, but that we through this visit of solidarity express what is written in the Book of Psalms: "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in the spirit." (Psalm 34:18).

Yours in Christ

Marianne Christiansen, Bishop

Peter Lodberg, Professor, Dr.