



Church World Service
Office of the Executive Director

National Council of Churches USA
Office of the General Secretary



Open Letter to the Heads of Christian Churches in Jerusalem

January 8, 2009

Dear Brothers in Christ:

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

We have received with deep appreciation your statement on the current devastating situation in Gaza. We share your “deep concern, regret and shock” at “the renewed cycle of violence” that has caused so much loss of life and destruction of property, including homes, businesses, schools, and hospitals. Writing on behalf of the member communions of Church World Service and the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, we express our solidarity with you and all those in the Holy Land who are grieved at this time of extreme sorrow, pain and suffering.

The season of the Nativity always brings with it a sense of hope. We thus began this new year hoping that peace might be on the horizon for all people in the world, among other places in Iraq and Afghanistan, in Pakistan and India, in Sri Lanka and Congo, in Darfur and Colombia, and most assuredly in Palestine and Israel. This hope has been jeopardized by the outbreak of renewed violent conflict in the Holy Land. At this time we even have heard some voices urging an expansion of the conflict beyond Gaza to other states in the region like Iran, rather than seeking an end to this and all wars.

Along with you and ecumenical partners worldwide, we call upon Israelis and Palestinians to cease their acts of violence and provocation, and we call upon the international community to work with both parties to achieve an immediate cease-fire and end the loss of life. We recognize that this latest round of violence stems from the lack of a final resolution to the Occupation and the establishment of viable parameters for peace in the region. Our current advocacy in the US and at the UN regarding this conflict is based on our historical calls for such a just and peaceful solution. As importantly, our ecumenical organizations are responding to this crisis by dialoguing with our Jewish and Muslim partners on the need for critical action to end the crisis, by addressing humanitarian needs, and by being fervent in prayer for all the victims of this conflict.

Those who call upon the One God of Abraham- be they Jews, Christians or Muslims - are called themselves to reveal the love of God to all people. This conflict, like all conflicts, betrays this calling. Together with you, we therefore pray that all who call upon the name of God may find the meaning of God's peace, for their own lives and for the sake of the world.

Yours in Christ,



The Rev. John L. McCullough
Executive Director/CEO
Church World Service



The Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon
General Secretary
The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA

Heads of Christian Churches in Jerusalem:

Patriarch Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate
Patriarch Fuad Twal, Latin Patriarchate.
Patriarch Torkom II, Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Patriarchate
Fr. Pier Battista Pizzaballa, ofm, Custody of the Holy Land
Anba Abraham, Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate.
Archbishop Swerios Malki Mourad, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate.
Abune Matthias, Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate
Archbishop Paul Nabil Syyah, Maronite Patriarchal Exarchate.
Bishop Suheil Dawani, Episcopal Church of Jerusalem & the Middle East.
Bishop Munib Younan, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land.
Bishop Pierre Malki, Syrian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate
Bishop Youssef Zre'i, Greek Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate.
Fr. Raphael Minassian, Armenian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate