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Palestinian delegation visits WCC with focus on faith, hope, and action



A Palestinian delegation visited the World Council of Churches (WCC) on 18 February to participate in deep dialogues on justice, peace, and the dignity of all people.

Gathering in deep solidarity and prayer, the delegation was led by His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine, and Head of the Jerusalem Council of Churches.

The Patriarch and the delegation met with WCC general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay, who reiterated the WCC's continued calls for a just peace, and for immediate action to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

The delegation and the WCC also discussed why the international community must act decisively in ensuring immediate access to humanitarian aid, including food, water, medical supplies, and shelter.

Patriarch Theophilos said, at the meeting, "The work of the World Council of Churches and the fellowship of churches is deeply appreciated in these challenging

times. Today the Christian presence faces many challenges."

He added: "Some of these challenges are the systematic attempts to rid Jerusalem of the historic Christian community by groups of Israeli radicals, some the result of policy initiatives, and some the result of war in Gaza."

"The Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches have not ceased to reiterate our calls for a lasting and effective ceasefire, economic support for rebuilding church-run hospitals, schools, and charities, and access for the Heads of the Churches to Gaza."

The Patriarch concluded: "Jerusalem and the Holy Land is a region where Jews, Christians, and Muslims can and should be able to live peacefully side by side. There is room here for all who call the Holy Land their home, and this is the beauty of the Holy City. This multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious city is the religious capital of the world, and the spiritual home of the monotheistic family."

Dr Ramzi Khoury, member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and chairman of the High Presidential Committee for Church Affairs, said: "We deeply appreciate your unwavering support for justice for our people during these challenging times. Now, more than ever, the unity of the churches is crucial. It is imperative for us to take a firm stand against the deliberate displacement of the Palestinian people. Today, the voice of the churches is urgently needed to advocate for a return to international law as a means to end wars and achieve justice.

"We reject the application of arrogance and force against our people. Accepting this harsh reality poses a threat not only to Palestinians but to all of humanity."

Dialogue with the Palestinian delegation also included reaffirming the WCC's commitment to defending the sanctity of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and all religious sites, ensuring they remain places of worship and refuge, not targets of war.

Pillay reaffirmed the WCC's categorical rejection of any plans for the forced transfer or permanent displacement of Palestinians from their land.

Peace cannot be achieved, Pillay said, without addressing the root causes of conflict—the illegal occupation, systemic discrimination, and denial of Palestinian self-determination.

The visit centered on praying for strength and courage for all Palestinian Christians, and the WCC's unwavering support to churches, communities, and people in

Palestine.

A premier screening of the documentary “Via Dolorosa: The Path of Sorrows” served as a sign of hope for the Christian presence and witness in the Holy Land.

The Palestinian delegation included:

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine, and Head of the Jerusalem Council of Churches

H. E. Dr Ramzi Khoury, member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman of the High Presidential Committee for Church Affairs, representing the Palestinian President

H.E. Mr Wasef Kilany on behalf of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

H.E. Mrs Amira Hanania, member of Higher Presidential Committee of Churches Affairs & representative to Europe, Member of Palestine National Council of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Rev. Prof. Mitri Raheb, president and founder of DarAl-Kalima University

Fr Ibrahim Faltas, vicar of the Custody of the Holy Land

Photo: Ivars Kupcis/WCC

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