23/04/2026

WCC deeply aggrieved by desecration of Jesus statue in Southern Lebanon

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World Council of Churches general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay said that he was deeply aggrieved by the desecration of a statue of Jesus on the cross by an Israeli soldier in southern Lebanon, depicted in a widely-circulated image.

“We join Christians in the region and around the world in their outrage and denunciation of this affront to the dignity and feelings of Christians everywhere, and in calling for accountability for those involved in perpetrating this act,” he said. “We are very grateful for the expressions of solidarity and support received from many Jewish counterparts and the subsequent effort to restore the statue.”

Sadly, this act is not an isolated incident, but reflective of a wider and growing trend, Pillay noted. “Church leaders of the region confirm this troubling and destabilising reality, as well as persistent and increasing constraints on freedom of worship,” he said. “Moreover, this incident took place in the context of Israeli military incursions in southern Lebanon which have not only led to this desecration of religious symbols but to the displacement and traumatization of entire communities, many of them Christian.”

Pillay called for an end to the Israeli military action in Lebanon, the swift withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon so that the displaced communities may return to their homes and places of worship, and sustained and effective action to turn the toxic tide of anti-Christian animosity in Israel.

Read the full statement below:

The World Council of Churches is deeply aggrieved by the desecration of a statue of Jesus on the cross by an Israeli soldier in southern Lebanon, depicted in a widely-circulated image.

We join Christians in the region and around the world in their outrage and denunciation of this affront to the dignity and feelings of Christians everywhere, and in calling for accountability for those involved in perpetrating this act. We are very grateful for the expressions of solidarity and support received from many

Jewish counterparts and the subsequent efforts to restore the statute.

Sadly, this act against Christians is not an isolated incident, but reflective of a wider and growing trend. A 2025 report by the Rossing Centre, a Jerusalem-based organisation promoting inter-faith relations in the Holy Land, described a “recent surge in overt animosity towards Christianity”, attributing this to “a continued deepening of polarisation and ultra-nationalist political trends”. Church leaders of the region confirm this troubling and destabilizing reality, as well as persistent and increasing constraints on freedom of worship.

Moreover, this incident took place in the context of Israeli military incursions in southern Lebanon which have not only led to this desecration of religious symbols but to the displacement and traumatization of entire communities, many of them Christian.

The World Council of Churches calls for an end to the Israeli military action in Lebanon, the swift withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon so that the displaced communities may return to their homes and places of worship, and sustained and effective action to turn the toxic tide of anti-Christian animosity in Israel.

Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay
General Secretary
World Council of Churches

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