

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

Subject: Urgent Call regarding Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land

We write to you as a representation of leaders of Christian communities and agencies in the United States with a deep concern for the well-being of our fellow Christians in the Holy Land and in support of the Heads of Churches of Jerusalem who have spoken publicly on the challenges facing their communities.

Ahead of your upcoming meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu, we urgently appeal to you to address the escalating violence, incitement, and hate crimes against Palestinian Christians under the new Israeli government. **We have heard of these challenges directly from the Churches of the Holy Land.** We feel their pain and recognize the challenges that they are facing. Together with the local Christian community in the Holy Land, we have the impetus to speak out and write you, Mr. President, advocating on their behalf and working to raise awareness of their situation and position.

Palestinian Christians today represent the continuous Christian presence in the Holy Land that dates back two thousand years. Christians and their churches are essential to the rich tapestry of Jerusalem and the Holy Land's religious, cultural, and political life. The vitality and flourishing of this community are critical elements in efforts to realize your call for security, freedom, and prosperity, in equal measure, for all the people of the land. They are simply the guardians of the holy shrine.

The Holy Land, a place of immense spiritual significance to Christians worldwide, is witnessing an alarming spike in targeted attacks against the indigenous Christian population, especially Christian clergy, but also against churches, cemeteries, and other sacred sites. These acts of hatred harm innocent individuals and communities while also carrying severe ramifications for Israel's international relations and damaging its credibility when it purports to be a place of religious tolerance. **We urgently request that you use the influence of your good office to call for swift and decisive action by Israel to hold perpetrators of these attacks accountable for their crimes so that this troubling reality might end.**

We remain deeply concerned about the immediate legal threat facing the Christian quarter and the Mount of Olives, where Jesus Christ spent his final days and ascended into the heavens. These places hold immense spiritual significance for Christians globally. The slow takeover of property in the Christian quarter and the proposed inclusion of the Mount of Olives into an Israeli national park could have far-reaching consequences for various Christian denominations. The later decision would strip the area's control away from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, the Armenian Patriarchate, the Catholic Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, the Russian Orthodox Church, and fundamentally disrupt Jerusalem's delicate religious balance, heritage, and character as a city of universal significance. It would further lead to the displacement of more Palestinians from Jerusalem, a city whose Palestinian population is perpetually under threat of eviction and expulsion without course. **We recognize that the hearing on this issue has**

**been postponed until the end of the year and call for your intervention to halt any plan that would take control of this sacred Christian site away from its current residents.**

Our affection for and obligation to our Palestinian Christian brothers and sisters compels us to act, as does our deep desire to see the Christian heritage in the Holy Land protected. We stand in solidarity with people who experience injustice and are denied their rights. We join the Church leaders of Jerusalem in their call to preserve and protect our Palestinian Christian siblings who endure daily persecution and discrimination. **We respectfully urge you to raise these pressing issues during your anticipated meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding all Christians' rights, safety, and dignity in the Holy Land.**

As we advocate for a lasting peace with justice for all the people of the Holy Land, we believe that determined efforts by the Government of Israel must ensure that Jerusalem is allowed to speak in its multiple voices--Jewish, Christian, and Muslim—and that all its residents can flourish, prosper and worship freely without fear of displacement, harassment, or violence. A strong stance against incitement and attacks, and a commitment to fostering a culture of mutuality and respect, is required for the Holy Land to reflect its historic role as a place of harmony and coexistence among different religious communities.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. May your meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu bring about positive changes and contribute to a more peaceful, just, and inclusive Holy Land.

Yours faithfully,

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Minister, Presbytery of Greater Atlanta

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Bishop of the Lutheran Church

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