



PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF THE CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM

Statement on the Commemoration of the Religious Observances of Advent and Christmas in the Midst of the Continuing War

November 22, 2024

Last year, as a means of standing in solidarity with the multitudes suffering from the newly erupted war, We, the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem, took a mutual decision to call upon our congregations to forego the public display of Christmas lights and decorations, along with their associated festivities.

While our intentions in doing so were good, many around the world nevertheless misinterpreted this call to signify a “Cancellation of Christmas” in the Holy Land—the very place of our Lord’s Holy Nativity. Because of this, our unique witness to the Christmas message of light emerging out of darkness (John 1:9) was diminished not only around the world, but also among our own people.

For this reason, for the coming Advent and Christmas seasons, we encourage our congregations and people to fully commemorate the approach and arrival of Christ’s birth by giving public signs of Christian hope. At the same time, we also call upon them to do so in ways that are sensitive to the severe afflictions that millions in our region continue to endure. These should certainly include upholding them continuously in our prayers, reaching out to them with deeds of kindness and charity, and welcoming them as Christ himself has welcomed each of us (Romans 15:7).

In these ways, we will echo the Christmas story itself, where the angels announced to the shepherds glad tidings of Christ’s birth in the midst of similarly dark times in our region (Luke 2:8–20), offering to them and to the entire world a message of divine hope and peace.

—The Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem