

Bishops urge world leaders to address needs of people in Holy Land



Below, the final communiqué of the 2012 Holy Land Coordination, which concluded in Jerusalem today. The closing statement concludes the bishops' four-day meeting.

Since 1998, the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has organised the annual meeting of the Coordination of Episcopal Conferences in Support of the Church of the Holy Land and at the invitation of the Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land. It is often more simply called the Holy Land Coordination.

Mandated by the Holy See, the Holy Land Coordination meets every January in the Holy Land, focusing on prayer, pilgrimage and persuasion with the aim of acting in solidarity with the Christian community there and sharing in the pastoral life of the local Church as it experiences intense political and social-economic pressure.

The Holy Land Coordination group includes bishops from Italy, Spain, England and Wales, France, Canada, Germany, the United States and the Nordic Bishops' Conference.

Holy Land Coordination 2012 Final Communiqué

We, the Bishops of the Holy Land Coordination, have met in the Holy Land since 1998, to be in solidarity with the local Christian community and share in the pastoral life of the local Church. While the faith we see in the Christians of the Holy Land is an inspiration to all, we have heard repeatedly and have seen ourselves that occupation and insecurity, fear and frustration dominate the life of people across this land. Blaming the other is an abdication of responsibility and a failure of leadership, a leadership that the people so desperately need. We have heard and we make this conviction our own: to be pro-Israeli has to mean being pro-Palestinian. This means being pro-justice for all, whose certain fruit is lasting peace.

We recognise the importance of the resumption of dialogue between the Palestinian Authority and

Israel. We echo the words of Pope Benedict to the diplomatic corps on 9 January when he expressed his hope that this dialogue "will be maintained, and that it will lead to lasting peace which guarantees the right of the two peoples to dwell in security in sovereign states and within secure and internationally recognised borders."

A negotiated agreement is urgently required.

That dialogue is threatened and undermined by extremism and intolerance of the other, the signs of which are only too apparent in the attitudes, judgements and actions of far too many in the world today. This is a concern for both sides and we appeal for tolerance and courageous leadership, able to show forgiveness and humility, to promote peaceful co-existence.

Despite the serious problems we heard and we saw this year, our faith gives us hope and there are signs of hope: the gathering of the Churches for the Synod on the Middle East; the increasing numbers of pilgrims; the inter-religious co-operation and friendship we witnessed in Galilee that offers an example to all; the housing projects of the Latin Patriarchate and the Custody of the Holy Land; the humanitarian efforts of Catholic organisations along with a range of other practical, educational and cultural initiatives to assist the local community - all of which we encourage and support. Above all our hope is nourished by the continuing witness of the Christian communities we met and with whom we celebrated our faith in Gaza, Nablus, Jerusalem and Galilee.

We also recognise the progress being made on negotiations between Israel and the Holy See, with hopes for a resolution soon.

Political leaders of both sides and our own countries need to show courage, resolve and creativity so the simple hopes of the majority for peaceful co-existence are realised. The fidelity to their way of life of Jews, Christians and Muslims should always be such that there is deep-seated openness to all others. May God bless all of the people of the Holy Land.

Signatories to the Holy Land Coordination Communiqué 2012 are:

Archbishop Patrick Kelly – Archbishop of Liverpool (England and Wales)

Archbishop Riccardo Fontana – Bishop of Arezzo-Cortona-Sansepolcro (Italy)

