

The message below was sent by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Pierbattista Pizzaballa, to Canon Mark Madden

17th May 2021

Dear Mark,

Unfortunately, this is not the first time and I fear not even the last in which we will have to deal with these explosions of violence and war in Holy Land. These outbreaks of violence will only leave more rubble, deaths, animosities and feelings of hatred, but they will bring no solution. We will see mutual accusations on the use of power, probably we will resort to international courts, accusing each other, but in the end, everything will be as before, until the next crisis.

Until we decide to really face the problems that have afflicted these countries and these peoples for decades, in fact, I fear that we will be forced to witness more violence and other grief.

Jerusalem is the heart of the problem and this time it was the spark that ignited the country. As is well known, it all started with the well-known question of Shekh Jarrah, which has been presented as a legal question. However, as we have already reiterated in our previous declaration, it is also evidently a decision that is an expression of a clear Israeli political determination to appropriate more and more space in East Jerusalem, to the detriment of the Palestinian population. It is an unjust decision, which challenges the already many times broken balance between the two parts of the city. This crisis, however, indicates that this methodology does not work and that no solution on Jerusalem can be imposed. The solution can only be the result of the dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians, who will both have to make their own the open, multi-religious and multicultural vocation of the city.

What has been said about Jerusalem can be extended to the whole Israeli-Palestinian question. The Palestinian people have been waiting for years for a dignified solution, a peaceful and peaceful future, in their land, in their country. For them, however, there seems to be no place in the world and, before being able to live with dignity at home, they are continually invited by the various Chancelleries to await an unknown and continually postponed future.

But even more worrying was the explosion of violence in the mixed cities of Israel, where Jews and Arabs have always lived together and which I think little has been said in the international media. We have witnessed violence, organized patrols, lynching attempts on both sides, Jews and Arabs ... an explosion of hatred and rejection of the other that probably had been brewing for some time and that has now emerged violently and has found everyone unprepared and frightened.

All this is the result of years of violent political language, of culture and politics of rejection of the other, of contempt. Little by little, these attitudes have created an ever-deeper separation between the two peoples, which we may not have realized until today. It will take a long time to rebuild these deeply wounded relationships. We will have to work with the many people, of all faiths, who still believe in a future together and are committed to it. They are a lot. But they need support, someone who can bring their voice to the whole world.

This crisis must bring the Israeli-Palestinian question back to the center of the international agenda, which lately seemed forgotten and overcome, but which nevertheless has always continued to be a painful wound. The wound was only covered, hidden, but never healed. Once the band that covered it was removed, it became visible and painful again, perhaps even more than in the past.

I invite you to pray for the Church of Jerusalem, so that it may be a Church that goes beyond closed walls and doors; that she believes, announces, builds peace, but "not as the world gives it" (Jn 14:27). We have, in fact, already witnessed too many times to betrayed and offended announcements of peace. The Church will have to build the peace which is the fruit of the Spirit, who gives life and trust, always anew, without ever getting tired.

I also pray that you will be able to convey our voice to your respective communities, religious and political, so that they promote the cause of justice and peace in the Holy Land in their respective contexts.

In Christ,

+Pierbattista