

Peace in the Middle East

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The Holy Land, the cradle of three major monotheistic religions, is soaked with the blood of innocent dead. Fear, suffering, the agony of forcibly displaced persons and widespread destruction burden the living. Jews, Christians, and Muslim, all children of Abraham the Father of Faith, are caught in unprecedented acts of violence. Holy sites, sanctuaries of peace, are in the grip of conflict. The site of the birth of Jesus, the Church of the Nativity, is a place of armed standoff.

How can this be? Where are the Ten Commandments given to Moses? Where is Jesus' call to "Love thy Enemy"? Where is the Qura'anic prohibition of the killing of the innocent, and Islam's call for Jihad only in defence of faith and society? All three great religions call for Peace with justice, all three make careful provision for self-defence, but none condones the shedding of innocent blood for any reason.

As the Moderator of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP), on its behalf, and as a believing Muslim, I call for a peaceful end to the siege around the Church of the Nativity and for the protection that the holy sites have been accorded throughout the ages.

Religious leaders in WCRP are united in rejecting terror, the intentional killing of innocent people, whether perpetrated by individuals or states. They are also united in their conviction that both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples have the right to live in neighboring states in peace and security.

Therefore, on behalf of and united with my religious colleagues in WCRP, I call:

First, upon Israeli and Palestinian leaders to work together to immediately

- a) withdraw the Israeli military forces from all the areas earmarked under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority;
- b) reject, condemn and take legally permissible action against all terrorism;
- c) effect a formal ceasefire;
- d) respect human rights and the commitments under the mutual agreements concluded between them; and,
- e) begin political negotiations aimed at the establishment of a just and durable peace;

Second, upon the member states of the Arab League to continue their laudable efforts to have a comprehensive peace established;

Third, upon the United Nations to take immediate steps necessary to create peace through mandates and instruments available to it;

Fourth, on all the states around the world to use their good offices in building peace and desisting from actions that could further exacerbate the conflict,

Fifth, upon the United States to actively exercise its peacemaking role, with the vigour commensurate with its capacity,

Sixth, upon the world community to unite in extending financial and technical assistance for the rehabilitation of war damages and the development of the Palestinian territories; and finally,

Seventh, upon believers around the world, especially the Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Holy Land, to unite in solidarity for Peace in the Land of Peace.

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