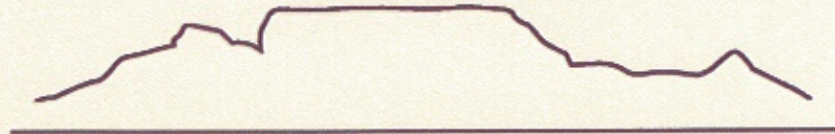




Archdiocese of Cape Town



STATEMENT ON THE CURRENT VIOLENCE IN THE HOLY LAND

“Blessed are the peace makers for they will be called children of God” (Mt 5:9)

It is with deep sadness and concern that we have been following the violent events in the Holy Land, a land of great importance to Christianity, as it is to all the Abrahamic faiths. Our hearts go out to all who have been affected by the violence, those who have been displaced, injured, killed, those who live in terror or who have lost loved ones. Most especially we hold in our hearts and prayers our acquaintances and those we regard as friends in Gaza, the West Bank and Israel who, in our past visits, have welcomed us and opened their doors to us.

The intensity of the violence and the rhetoric lays bare a raw hatred which has shocked us. It must be borne in mind that this is not a religious conflict. While it has deep historic roots, it is intensified and is a consequence of the dispossession of Palestinian land and the establishment of Israeli settlements, the blockade of Gaza and the separation wall enclosing the West Bank.

We know that there are many people of good will among all sides of the conflict, people of conscience who long for peace, who recognize the disproportionate nature of the power and violence and who are willing to enter into dialogue with others to find a way towards a true peace. We call on them to make their voices heard and to recall the words of Pope Paul VI who said “if you want peace, work for justice”. He rightly stated that such an endeavour requires “greatness of soul” and it is such greatness – and not the “greatness” of weapons that destroy, maim and kill – that is required at this time. It is the greatness of truth and honesty that paves the path to justice, while avoidance and obfuscation will only pave the path to a future of ongoing violence without any resolution or any hope of peace.

Christ taught us that it is not loving or longing for peace that makes us blessed. It is those who make peace who will be considered blessed in God’s eyes. It is an obligation on all leaders to encourage and facilitate a true peace which, once again, can only arise through truth and justice. We appeal to all leaders of the Holy Land to end the violence, to respect the lives and dignity of all who live in that beautiful land, to commit themselves to the practise of justice, to peace and to end the violence.

Finally, as a step towards peace, we call on all parties to allow and accept an investigation by the International Criminal Court into possible war crimes so that appropriate action may be taken against any persons who have committed such crimes and, by so doing, have exacerbated the situation.

Now is a time to overcome partisan interests, and to pray for wisdom which comes from God, a wisdom in the words of St James, “that comes down from above [and] is essentially something pure; it is also peaceable, kindly and considerate; it is full of mercy and shows itself by doing good; nor is there any trace of partiality or hypocrisy in it” (James 3:17). May the leaders involved in this conflict show such wisdom.

+Stephen Brislin
Catholic Archbishop of Cape Town

20th May 2021