

State of Palestine

*Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations
Geneva*



دولة فلسطين

*البعثة المراقبة الدائمة لدى الأمم المتحدة
جنيف*

**Your Beatitude Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem,
Dear Dr. Reverend Jerry Pillay, Secretary General of the World Council of
Churches,**

**Dr. Ramzi Khoury, Member of the Executive Committee of the PLO, Head of
the Higher Presidential Committee of Churches in Palestine**

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we are here to celebrate the successful restoration project of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem Palestine. The art exhibition- Bethlehem Reborn, featuring the pictures surrounding us, not only showcases art but also documents the historical aspects of the renovation work.

The story of the Church of the Nativity is the story of the birth of the king of Peace, but also of Christianity as a whole. The message of peace came from Palestine to the world, through words that continue to inspire millions of faithful: ***“Glory to God in the highest!”***

We are gathering at the World Council of Churches, a symbol of Christian unity, to celebrate our accomplishments and reaffirm our commitment to protect the Christian presence at its birthplace, Palestine. The recent renovation revealed magnificent mosaics near the church, a testament to our rich Palestinian history. However, we must also focus on the future. I would like to emphasize the importance of our collective work for justice in the Holy Land away from the current pain and suffering.

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The exhibition vividly portrays the rich religious and cultural identity of Palestine. The pictures take us on a journey to the birthplace of Jesus in Bethlehem, as well as to the City of Jerusalem where he was resurrected. This exhibition provides a unique opportunity to connect not just with the historic buildings but also with the people, reminding us that occupied Jerusalem requires our support during these challenging times when freedom is denied. Despite enduring a prolonged Israeli occupation, Palestinians persist in their struggle for their fundamental national rights. The Church serves as a constant reminder of hope, the imperative of justice, and the promise of a fresh beginning with God's grace in the near future.

As we are here alongside our friends and partners, we extend an invitation to everyone to join us in our efforts to advance justice and peace in the Holy Land, Palestine. We also urge you to support the safeguarding of the holy religious sites in Jerusalem, most notably the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which face daily challenges and attacks from Israeli settlers and occupation forces.

Finally, our thanks to Reverend Jerry Pillay, General Secretary of the WCC and to his wonderful team for hosting us here today. We are proud of your advocacy work and protective presence in the Holy Land, and we will be glad to help and support in every way possible.

“Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God”

God bless Palestine...