

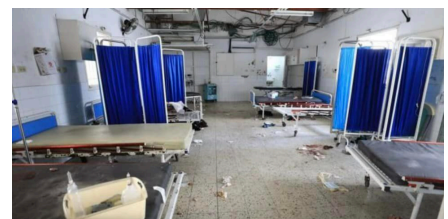


APPG On Christianity in the Holy Land

The APPG continues to monitor the situation as it unfolds in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank. We are in touch with our contacts and scanning websites for updates as it pertains to Christian institutions and communities throughout the region.

Diocese of Jerusalem protest forced closure of Anglican-run Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza

On July 7th, the Anglican-run Al-Ahli hospital in Gaza was forced to close. Following firing from drones in the immediate vicinity of the hospital, an IDF announcement declared everyone should evacuate the hospital, including staff, patients, and vulnerable people sheltering in the grounds.



On Monday, the Diocese of Jerusalem released a statement, in which Anglican Archbishop Hosam Naoum strongly condemned the closure, stating “It is essential that emergency services are maintained to treat the injured and the dying”. He further pleaded for the end of targeting of civilians and demanded “all parties agree to an immediate ceasefire”. On Thursday, following reassurances from the Israeli army, the Al-Ahli hospital was able to re-open.

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Israeli government demands churches pay property tax

Israeli authorities have demanded churches pay unfounded municipal taxes - called “arnona” - in a move which undermines the Status Quo.

According to leaders of major churches, Israeli authorities launched a “coordinated attack” against them by initiating tax proceedings and threatening legal action if taxes were not paid.

In response, heads of Catholic, Greek, Orthodox and Armenian Orthodox churches wrote a letter to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, describing the demands as “an attempt to drive Christian presence out of the Holy Land”.

Cardinal Matteo Maria Zuppi, Archbishop of Bologna pays solidarity visit to the Holy Land

On 13th June, 160 pilgrims from Bologna and other parts of Italy made their way to the Holy Land to pray for peace in the region.

In a mass presided over by the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Archbishop of Bologna, Cardinal Pizzaballa thanked the pilgrims for their solidarity, especially at a time when communities are “closing in on themselves” instead of working together.

Following his visit, the Patriarch called on decision-makers to end the war, and open avenues for aid to avoid what he described as an “imminent humanitarian crisis”.



Pilgrimage Industry in the Holy Land ‘on its knees’ amid conflict



The pilgrimage and tourism industries have remained at a near standstill following the events of October 7th, severely impacting the livelihoods of Christians living in East Jerusalem and occupied Palestinian territories.

Restaurants and tour group providers in Jerusalem report that staff are having to be let go and contracts with hotels and suppliers terminated due to lack of customers. The situation is even worse outside of Jerusalem, where even fewer pilgrims are visiting. According to a shop owner in Bethlehem, “nearly everyone has lost their job”.

The number of tourists who visited Israel between January and March this year is down to one-fifth from last year's figures.

Jerusalem-based organisation denounce disturbing rise in attacks against Christians

The Rossing Center for Education and Dialogue, a Jerusalem-based peace-building organisation, has released its 2023 report on attacks on Christians in Israel and East Jerusalem.

The report records over 32 documented cases of attacks on Churches and 30 formally reported cases of spitting. Commenting on these figures, which it describes as “disturbing”, the report notes a “concerning trend of increased attacks including spitting, physical and verbal harassment, property damage and disruption of liturgies”.

It also calls for the urgent need for collaborative efforts to enhance police intervention, increased educational awareness about Christianity in Israel, and stronger public condemnation of the attacks from authorities and Jewish leadership.



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