



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

July 17, 2014

The Rev. Dr. Munib Younan
Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land
P.O. Box 14076
Muristan Rd.
91140 JERUSALEM

Dear Bishop Younan,

On behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, I am writing to express profound concern for you, our sisters and brothers in Christ. Our hearts are heavy as we read about and see images of the violence being inflicted on both Israelis and Palestinians. This suffering and loss of life are inexcusable before God. As followers with you of the Prince of Peace, and as children of God, the Creator and Sustainer of all life, we long for peace and a just resolution to the escalating conflict between the State of Israel and the Palestinian people. I want to respond directly to your [call](#) to us earlier this week to participate in interventions and actions “to create hope in a hopeless situation”.

The steadfastness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) is a reminder of this hope we have in Christ Jesus. The church's strong witness for coexistence grounded in peace with justice permeates every level of congregational, educational, and diaconal service. Our faith is strengthened by knowing how, even in the midst of great difficulties, the Body of Christ is working in Palestine and Jordan for the good of all communities.

Along with the witness of your pastors and lay leaders, your witness, Bishop Younan, has strengthened our confidence that peace can indeed be achieved among the two peoples and three religions that share the Holy Land. Your statements, speeches, and sermons have been a model for promoting both political and interreligious coexistence, along with your strong support of the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land, which you helped found.

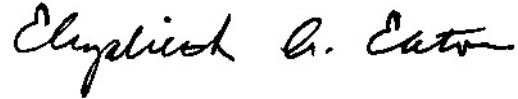
We are grateful for your continued uplifting of the voices of moderation and against extremism and support to you in these efforts. We appreciate the long-standing work of the ELCJHL schools in demonstrating the importance of education through a curriculum based on peace, nonviolence, peaceful co-existence and the strengthening of civil society for the benefit of all communities. We understand that this present crisis has further hurt the financial wellbeing of the ELCJHL schools, as many parents are now unable to pay tuition. We encourage ELCA members and congregations to assist the ELCJHL by making contributions through the ELCA.

At this time of great uncertainty, we join you in your call for a cessation of all hostilities between Israel and Hamas and a return to direct peace talks to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable peace based upon a two-state solution and adherence to international human rights and humanitarian law. We wish to convey our solidarity with you and the members of ELCJHL congregations, joining with you in prayers for peace. I encourage all ELCA congregations to participate in a minute of silence as we together pray for peace in the Holy Land.

While I lament that my plan to be present with you and with the leaders and members of the ELCJHL later this month has been postponed, I look forward to our time together in Jordan and the Holy Land. We deeply regret that the most recent round of negotiations have not reached a successful outcome that will lead to peace and security for Palestinians and Israelis alike. We reaffirm our pledge to work diligently with you and all people of good will to urge political leaders in the United States and around the world contribute to ending this conflict by addressing its root causes so a sustainable peace is possible.

May God be with you, your church and all the people of the Holy Land.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth A. Eaton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop