



“Liberation, not annexation”

A statement from Bishop Sani Ibrahim Azar

Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land

Pentecost 2020

The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

At the time of this writing, the world is fighting a virus that has swept the globe, challenging economies, burdening health systems, and destroying lives. The congregations and leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land have not been exempted from this suffering. We pray, along with all of you, for a vaccine and for wise decisions by governments and citizens.

I am writing this statement today, amid the global pandemic, because the political situation here in Israel and Palestine has taken a dramatic turn for the worse. The ELCJHL asks for your attention, for your solidarity, and for your action at this time of crisis.

Prime Minister Netanyahu’s government, backed by the Trump administration, has taken advantage of the current global health crisis to move forward with plans to annex West Bank settlements and the Jordan Valley (or as they claim, to impose the Israeli sovereignty over these areas). This political maneuver is expected to take place as early as July 2020.

This unilateral action—taken without negotiations and consultation with Palestinian leaders—ignores long-standing peace accords agreed upon under international sponsorship and guarantees. Annexation violates international law and is certain to have severe consequences for Israeli and Palestinian people.

First and foremost, it is a move that will have catastrophic implications on any peace process and the future of a two-state solution. It will eradicate any potential for a viable and contiguous Palestinian state and will leave Palestinians living in cantons. The Palestinian Authority would be left with no peace partner and is likely to dissolve. This outcome would pave the way for

*The Evangelical Lutheran Church
in Jordan and the Holy Land*



**الكنيسة الإنجيلية اللوثرية
في الأردن والأراضي المقدسة**

extremist voices to take center stage. Recent Israeli elections show that the Israeli public favors right-wing, hawkish positions over any effort toward peaceful negotiations. These factors show there is good reason to worry that annexation would lead this region once again into chaos, violence, and war.

As bishop of the ELCJHL, I am proud to say that our Church has always prayed, preached, and worked for a lasting and just peace between Palestine and Israel. In our schools, from our pulpits, and in our families, we teach our children and our communities to value life, understanding, and coexistence. We still hope, and we still believe, that peace is possible. We believe that the best possible future is one in which Palestine and Israel live side by side as neighbors, friends and partners, with agreed-upon 1967 borders, and with Jerusalem as a city shared by two peoples and three religions (Islam, Judaism, and Christianity). We are grateful that so many of you have stood with us over several decades to move this just vision forward.

Accordingly, at this critical time, we call upon our friends, partner churches, and allies around the world to advocate for us now. Please lobby your politicians, speak out on social media, call on friends in halls of power, and tell them that the US-Israeli plan for annexation is not the way to peace based on justice. Annexation is not the way to reconciliation and living together for the people of this land, who all deserve the chance for a liberated future: Israeli and Palestinian, Jew, Christian, and Muslim.

While the world fights valiantly against one serious disease, we ask that you not let the people of the Holy Land be overcome by this one unilateral action that has dangerous potential to spread human tragedy, violence, and injustice across the entire region of the Middle East.

I thank you for your faithful advocacy, friendship, and support. I pray you will join us in this critical moment to stand up with the ELCJHL and other churches and to demand liberation, not annexation.

May the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

+ Bishop Sani-Ibrahim Azar

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sani-Ibrahim Azar', written over the printed name.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land

Tel.: +972-2-6266800

Fax: +972-2-6285764

P.O. Box 14076 – Muristan Road – Jerusalem 91140

E-Mail: administration@elcjl.org

هاتف رقم: +972-2-6266800

فاكس رقم: +972-2- 6285764

ص.ب 14076 - شارع المارستان - القدس 91140

Website: