



The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ELCJHL supports CRIHL demand for respect for all religious sites

Jerusalem – (Nov. 19, 2009) Rev. Dr. Munib A. Younan, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, today affirmed the statement of a Jerusalem interfaith organization calling for respect for the city's holy sites.

"At the height of tensions in Jerusalem, Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders were able to come together to write a statement in order to bring peace and justice to Jerusalem," Younan said. The bishop of the Middle East's Lutheran church body is a founding member of the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land, which issued the statement, and is comprised of local leaders of Jerusalem's Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities.

The Nov. 13 statement, which calls for respect for the holy sites of all three religions, came in response to recent clashes on the al-Aqsa Mosque compound. The statement reads:

"The Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land regrets that the holy sites in Jerusalem continue to be exploited for conflict in Jerusalem and the Holy Land. The Council reaffirms its commitment to advancing respect between religious communities in Jerusalem, the protection of each community's holy sites and their sensitivities.

"Accordingly, in the wake of recent violent events, we express our support for all calls such as that of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Sheikh Muhammed Hussein, advocating non-violence and respect for the special and current status of the Al Aqsa Mosque, and the official repeated position of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel that it is prohibited by Jewish law (the *Halacha*) [for Jews] to enter the area.

"Together we call for the respect for the holy sites of all three religions and for peace of Jerusalem."

Clashes broke out in late September when extremist Jews entered the area with Israeli soldiers, according to a Ma'an News Agency report available at <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=228517>.

This followed reports by the Islamic Christian Society in Support of Jerusalem that said that Israel plans to allow Jewish worshippers exclusive access to the compound to worship on 50 Jewish holidays.

Younan commended Sheikh Hussein for his positive speech of non-violence and respect in response to recent events.

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