

“All peoples must be respected by the powerful in their identity and rights”

*Joint Statement by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem
and the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, 26 August 2025*



“In the path of righteousness there is life, in walking its path there is no death” (Proverbs 12,28).

A few weeks ago, the Israeli government announced its decision to take control of Gaza City. In recent days, the media have repeatedly reported a massive military mobilization and preparations for an imminent offensive. The same reports indicate that the population of Gaza City, where hundreds of thousands of civilians live – and where our Christian community is located – is to be evacuated and relocated to the south of the Strip. At the time of this statement, evacuation orders were already in place for several neighbourhoods in Gaza City. Reports of heavy bombardment continue to be received. There is more destruction and death in a situation that was already dramatic before this operation. It seems that the Israeli government’s announcement that “the gates of hell will open” is indeed taking on tragic forms. The experience of past campaigns in Gaza, the declared intentions of the Israeli government with regard to the current operation, and the reports now reaching us from the ground, show that the operation is not just a threat, but a reality that is already in the process of being implemented.

Since the outbreak of the war, the Greek Orthodox compound of *Saint Porphyrius* and the *Holy Family* compound have been a refuge for hundreds of civilians. Among them are elderly people, women, and children. In the Latin compound we are hosting since many years people with disabilities, who are under the care of the *Sisters Missionaries of Charity*. Like other residents of Gaza City, the refugees living in the facil-

ities will have to decide according to their conscience what they will do. Among those who have sought shelter within the walls of the compounds, many are weakened and malnourished due to the hardships of the last months. Leaving Gaza City and trying to flee to the south would be nothing less than a death sentence. For this reason, the clergy and nuns have decided to remain and continue to care for all those who will be in the compounds.

We do not know exactly what will happen on the ground, not only for our community, but for the entire population. We can only repeat what we have already said: There can be no future based on captivity, displacement of Palestinians or revenge. We echo what Pope Leo XIV said a few days ago: *“All peoples, even the smallest and weakest, must be respected by the powerful in their identity and rights, especially the right to live in their own lands; and no one can force them into exile.”* (Address to the group of refugees from Chagos, 23. August 2025).

This is not the right way. There is no reason to justify the deliberate and forcible mass displacement of civilians.

It is time to end this spiral of violence, to put an end to war and to prioritize the common good of the people. There has been enough devastation, in the territories and in people’s lives. There is no reason to justify keeping civilians as prisoners and hostages in dramatic conditions. It is now time for the healing of the long-suffering families on all sides.

With equal urgency, we appeal to the international community to act for an end of this senseless and destructive war, and for the return of the missing people and the Israeli hostages.

“In the path of righteousness there is life, in walking its path there is no death” (Proverbs 12,28). Let us pray that all our hearts may be converted, so that we may walk in the paths of justice and life, for Gaza and for the whole Holy Land.

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