

REGIONAL EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF NORTH AFRICA
(CERNA)
CONFERENCE OF THE LATIN BISHOPS OF THE ARAB REGIONS
(CELRA)

MESSAGE
To the Bishops' Conferences

To our Brother Bishops in the World.
Greetings and Peace in Jesus Christ Our Lord.

We, the Bishops of the Regional Episcopal Conference of North Africa (CERNA) and of the Conference of the Latin Bishops of the Arab Regions (CELRA), gathered in Rome from 11 - 16 October 2004, have reflected together on the problems of justice and peace in our different regions. All our countries are threatened by the instability in the Middle East, which also threatens the peace of the whole world. However, some countries suffer more than others from this situation: Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, and the Holy Land, both Palestine and Israel. Considering all these conflicts and others, so numerous in the world, we have centred our reflection in particular on the Holy Land.

The situation has dragged on many years now, and requires, today more than ever, action to put an end to the sufferings of all the inhabitants of this land, Jews, Christians and Moslems, who have become equally incapable of ending the conflict, fettered as they are in a spiral of cruel and irrational violence. Both peoples, Palestinian and Israeli, are on the verge of perishing, the strong as well as the weak, those who use violence as well as those who wait patiently for a peaceful solution.

The conflict in the Holy Land is the concern of all Christians, who are aware that their spiritual roots lie in the land of Christ's Redemption.

We are grateful to the Holy Father for his words and initiatives in favour of peace. We are grateful to all the Churches for their numerous messages and gestures of solidarity and for their great generosity.

But we believe that the Churches can do still more. If all the Churches of the world recognize their duty towards the Holy Land, and if they all join together in common and concerted action to sensitize their governments, their people and the international community, their intervention will become a decisive factor in the attainment of peace, justice and reconciliation in the Holy Land.

Our Churches have received from the Lord a ministry of reconciliation. We do not call you to take one side against another. On the contrary, we want you to help both sides find the way to reconciliation. We are calling for a new awakening in the Churches of the world, for a strong voice to be raised to promote peace in this Holy Land, where both peoples are in need of outside help in order to find peace and reconciliation.

The time of Advent is approaching. The Christian world will soon celebrate Christmas and the Nativity of the Saviour-Messiah, the Prince of Peace, while blood continues to flow at Bethlehem and in the entire Holy Land.

We, the Bishops of the two Conferences, propose to our Communities that Wednesday, 22 December 2004, be a day of fasting and prayer for this intention. We ask you to unite with us, together with your own communities, in this or in any other initiative.

We are aware that we and our people are powerless in this situation. Therefore we put our hope in God and in your action. God is good to all, and His goodness will finally overcome the evil of war in the land where He has chosen to come into the world.

"In Jerusalem everyone is born", says the psalmist. It is the duty of all the Churches to contribute to the building of peace and reconciliation in the Holy Land.

Your brother Bishops,

+ **Michel Sabbah**

Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem
President of C.E.L.R.A.

+ **Paul Dahdah**

Archbishop, Ap. Vic. of Beirut

+ **Jean Sleiman**

Archbishop of Baghdad

+ **Selim Sayegh**

Aux. Bishop, Ap. Vic., Jordan

+ **Kamal-Hanna Bathish**

Aux. Bishop, Vic. Gen., Jerusalem

+ **Giacinto-Boulos Marcuzzo**

Aux. Bishop, Vic. Gen for Israel

+ **Jean-Baptiste Gourion**

Aux. Bishop, Hebrew speaking Com., Israel

+ **Bernardo Gremoli**

Bishop, Ap. Vic. of Arabia

+ **Giuseppe Bausardo**

Bishop, Ap. Vic. of Alexandria

+ **Francis Micallef**

Bishop, Ap. Vic, of Kuwait

+ **Giorgio Bertin**

Bishop of Djibouti,
Ap. Adm. of Mogadiscio

+ **Giuseppe Nazzaro**

Bishop, Ap. Vic. of Aleppo

+ **Paul Hinder**

Aux. Bishop of Arabia

+ **Fr. Umberto Barato, ofm**

Vic. Gen. of Cyprus

+ **Fouad Twal**

Archbishop, Bishop of Tunis
President of C.E.R.N.A.

+ **Henri Teissier**

Archbishop of Algiers

+ **Vincent Landel**

Archbishop of Rabat

+ **Alphonse Georger**

Bishop of Oran

+ **Gabriel Piroird**

Bishop of Constantine

+ **Giovanni Martinelli**

Bishop, Ap. Vic. of Tripoli

+ **Sylvester Magro**

Bishop, Ap. Vic. of Benghazi

+ **Martin Happe**

Bishop of Nouakchott

Mgr. Acacio Valbuena

Ap. Pref. of El Laayoune

P. Miguel Larburu

Dioc. Adm. of Laghouat

Rome, 15 October 2004