



Statement by Ambassador Issa Kassissieh on the Eve of Christmas and the arrival of the Relic of the Crib of Jesus Christ to Bethlehem

On the eve of Christmas, Palestine warmly welcomes the gesture made by His Holiness Pope Francis to send to Bethlehem a relic of the crib of Jesus Christ from the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome.

The arrival of the relic of the baby Jesus Christ on November 29 to Palestine was greeted with joy and hope by the Palestinian leadership and community. This will undoubtedly be a very special Christmas in the Holy Land. Indeed, we witnessed in many Palestinian cities the lighting of the Christmas tree and the Christmas parade with joy and celebrations. Christmas brings happiness to our children despite the hardship Palestine is passing through. Our Holy Land is the birthplace of Christianity, an inherent part of our national identity that we are extremely proud of. On this occasion, we appreciate the principled position the Holy See has endorsed towards Palestine and in particular the latest of which the positive response from His Holiness Pope Francis to the request made by HE President Mahmoud Abbas a year ago during their audience in the Vatican city to make this a reality. The piece of the relic is a sign of fraternity, hope and faithfulness.

The State of Palestine will continue to pray and work with the Holy See and the Churches of Jerusalem and around the world to promote peace and tranquility in our homeland so that all the faithful and pilgrims alike can enjoy our cultural heritage and hospitality while visiting Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Jericho and the rest of Palestine.

Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to people of good will.

Rome, 23rd December 2019