

H.E. Issa Jamil Kassissieh

INTERVIEW

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- Mr Ambassador, I can imagine how difficult it is today to explain the situation in Palestine in words. (comment)

We are living the continuation of the Nakba which started in 1948. The miseries today in Gaza strip is beyond imagination, and as the Secretary General of the UN Mr. Gutteres said: , "Gaza has become a graveyard for our children". And today it has become unlivable after the complete destruction of its cities, Refugees, and all the social fabric of Gaza Strip. And here, I say to those who believe that might is right, and that such a policy will bring security and stability to the Israelis, definitely they are wrong. Pope Frances said that " War is a defeat by itself". In reality the power of logic and tranquility should prevail. And it is time for our people to see the end of war, once and for all, and most importantly to practice their freedom and dignity within their recognized state based on the international legitimacy. It is very possible to reach to the endgame where Israel and Palestine will coexist with good neighboring relationship, and where the mutual coordination and cooperation will expand naturally regionally and internationally, based on the Arab Peace Initiative including the relevant UN resolutions. The exchange of the birth certificate by both will legitimize the very existence of the other. And I say here to the Israelis that peace is the only battle worth waging, and not enmity and wars. For the international community, I say that for the sake of world security, their support should not be limited to lip service and empty promises, but the political will should be the driving force to get us to the sea shore safely. The recognition of Palestine is the realization of the UNSC resolutions including other UNGA resolutions. The 1967 borders is the line to say to those who dream and work for exclusivity, that the time has come to share equally the land of prophets.

- How would you define relations between Palestine and the Holy See today?

The relation between Palestine and the Holy See:

The Holy See was one of the first state within the European continent to recognize the state of Palestine in 2015 by signing a comprehensive agreement between state of Palestine and the Holy See. His Holiness took the moral stand long before when he did his pilgrimage visit to Bethlehem via Jordan by a Chopper. At that moment, he signaled his intention to recognize the very right of the self-determination of the Palestinian people. It is this Pope who canonized Two Nuns from Palestine, St. Mariam of Jesus Crucified Baourdy and St. Marie Alphonsine Ghattas. It is, the Holy Father who stood in front of the ugly wall

separating Jerusalem from Bethlehem and praying for building bridges of justice and peace and not the walls of hatred and enmity. It is, this Pope who repeatedly called for immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the humanitarian assistance without any hurdles to the Palestinian people in Gaza. He spoke about Israel and Palestine to live side by side in mutual respect and peace. It is our hope that the Holy See would intensify their efforts especially with the American administration to put an end to the atrocities committed in Gaza and to ensure the de-escalation in the West Bank, and to contribute in the arrangement for the day after. At this point the Holy See should ensure that the city of Jerusalem would maintain its special characteristics, as a spiritual center for the three monotheistic religions and the historic and legal status quo is preserved. The Vatican must not allow for one side to over dictate its unilateral and exclusive policies towards changing the democratic and geographic features of the city. Today, and even before yesterday the Holy See with its partners should act and initiate to salvage the very existence of Christianity in the holy city of Jerusalem or else, the living stones and the indigenous guardians of the holy shrines will not be there in the near future. If today the bell has not yet rung in the circles of the Vatican to act swiftly and quickly with great determination to preserve the Christian dimension of the holy city of Jerusalem, I am afraid it will be too late to salvage the Christian dimension of the Holy City, the cradle of Christianity.

- Can you tell me what you think last October 7th?

There are those around the world who speak about the current escalation as if history started on October 7th. It did not. The first massacres occurred around 1948 when Palestinians were uprooted from their land. Deir Yasin massacre by Menachim Begin who became Prime Minister, Tantoura, and Qibya in 1952 by Ariel Sharon who became Prime Minister and then he committed the Sabra and Sahtila massacres, and Jenin Refugee Camp massacre- to name a few. In order to build a culture of peace we must remove the reason for animosity. The events of October 7th, terrible as they are, must help us focus on the real issue. We must use October 7th as a springboard for a new reality. We condemn the killings of any human being. God created man in his own image. A healing process must start. Let us work together, join hands, to make October 7th the last act of violence in this terrible conflict.

- How do you imagine the future of Palestine?

I have great aspiration to realize our dream, as people deserve to live in freedom and dignity. It is my dream to have a democratic and viable State of Palestine with its pluralistic face and with full transparency and accountability of its institutions. The prelude to this is to overcome internal contradictions and reconciliation within ourselves in order to create the right objective conditions to achieve our national goal i.e., which is the independence of Palestine and to live in tranquility and peace with our neighbors on the basis of mutual respect and cooperation.