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RAT DER EUROPÄISCHEN BISCHOFSKONFERENZEN (CCEE)
CONSEIL DES CONFÉRENCES EPISCOPEALES EUROPÉENNES (CCEE)

Gallusstrasse 24
CH-9000 St. Gallen (Schweiz)
Tel: +41 71 227 6040 / Fax: +41 71 227 6041
www.ccee.eu
ccee@ccee.eu



CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES (CEC)
CONFÉRENCE DES ÉGLISES EUROPÉENNES (KEK)
KONFERENZ EUROPÄISCHER KIRCHEN (KEK)

rue Joseph II, 174,
BE-1000 Brussels
Tel: +32 2 230 17 32 / Fax: +32 2 231 14 13
www.ceceurope.org
cec@cec-kek.org

St. Gallen (Switzerland)/Brussels(Belgium), 16 March 2018

Letter issued jointly by CCEE-CEC

To: Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem, All Palestine and Jordan Theophilos III, His Beatitude Nurhan Boghos Manoogian, Patriarch of the Apostolic Throne of St. James (Armenian) and Fr. Francesco Patton OFM, Custos of the Holy Land

Your Beatitudes,

Your Eminence,

On behalf of the Joint Committee of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE), who recently gathered in Brussels for their annual meeting on 9-10 March 2018, we would like to express our full support for the recent joint statement by the leaders of the Churches of the Holy Land.

Recognizing the steps that the prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has done so far, we hope that the Israeli Government may act as guarantor of all the Holy Places in Jerusalem, in respect of the status quo and defend the presence of the Christians in the Holy Land. The yearning for peace in this land is also part of the commitment to oppose any form of discrimination on the basis of religion. In accordance with the "existing agreements and international obligations which guarantee the rights and privileges of the Churches", we trust that the Israeli Government, supported by the Israeli people's desire for peace and justice, can prevail over the decision of the municipality of Jerusalem to tax the Churches' property. This measure would put at risk not just religious and charitable services aimed at the whole population of the territory, but the very Christian presence itself in Jerusalem.

We also hope that the European institutions and the Governments will do all that is within their power to support International law and peace in the Holy Land. The construction of the common European home, in a continent profoundly marked by its Jewish-Christian roots, is also part of the commitment to oppose any form of discrimination on the basis of religion, as well as any limitation of religious freedom or the violation of international law outside Europe, too.

We pray that you may spend these last weeks of Lent in peace and serenity awaiting the Easter and may the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the consciences of the rulers of all nations.

Rt Rev. Christopher Hill KCVO, DD
President of CEC

H.Em. Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco
Archbishop of Genoa, President of the CCEE