



at Lambeth Palace yesterday (Tuesday 10th September).

Neil Turner

Archbishop Justin Welby met with human rights lawyer Dalia Qumsieh and campaigner Mays Nassar at Lambeth Palace. Pastor Reverend Dr Munther Isaac joined the meeting via video link, having been delayed in travelling to the UK due to the current closure of the Allenby Bridge crossing between Jordan and the West Bank.

The Archbishop heard about ongoing devastation in Gaza and the deteriorating situation in the West Bank. He heard about the plight of the Palestinian Christian community in West Bank cities including Bethlehem and Jenin, where violent attacks and land theft continue on a daily basis.

They discussed the forcible displacement of the Palestinian Christian Kisiya family from their ancestral land in the Makhrour Valley in Bethlehem in July. Archbishop Justin also expressed his deep concern for the thousands of Palestinians, including Christians, currently being held in Israeli military prisons without charge. The group told the Archbishop about the terrible impact this has on the families spending years without their loved ones. There was a recognition in the conversation that every human life is precious, both Israeli and Palestinian, and that both peoples deserve safety, dignity and freedom.



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The delegation, whose visit to the UK is being coordinated by Sabeel-Kairos, the Council for Arab and British Understanding and FairSquare, then joined the Archbishop for Evening Prayer in the Crypt Chapel at Lambeth Palace. The Archbishop prayed for the Palestinian delegation, for the people of Palestine, and for all the people of the region.

The Archbishop of Canterbury said: "It was a privilege to meet and pray today with some of our Palestinian Christian sisters and brothers. I praise God for their steadfastness in the face of occupation, systemic discrimination and devastating violence. I thank God for their faithfulness in the land where Christ lived, died and was raised from the dead. I am profoundly grieved by what I heard today, and I cry out to God for the war in Gaza to stop. How many more stories of families, homes and communities destroyed must we hear before this senseless killing ceases?"

"The civilians of Gaza remain in my prayers each day and we must pray and advocate for them – including the vanishing Christian community, and the Anglican-run Ahli Hospital. Meanwhile the violence, land theft and repression being endured by Palestinians, including the Christian



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“Every human life in the Holy Land is precious, and I mourn with Palestinian and Israeli families continuing to suffer unbearable trauma and loss. I continue to call for a ceasefire and the release of all hostages, and for unfettered aid to reach those in need in Gaza. The killing of innocents and the destruction of Gaza will not bring peace: that will only come when the dignity of every single person in the Holy Land is respected and protected. That must include Israel ending its illegal occupation of Palestinian land – and the international community supporting the realisation of the Palestinian people’s fundamental right to self-determination. Please continue to pray for the peoples of the Holy Land – for justice, security and lasting peace for all.”

The Archbishop has been regularly meeting and praying with Palestinian Christian leaders over recent months, including Fr Fadi Diab of St Andrew's Anglican Church in Ramallah, and Fr Gabriel Romanelli of Gaza City's Holy Family Catholic Parish. He also spoke via video with Pastor Munther Isaac in March this year.

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