



ional Commission, which is being held in Cairo this week.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As you begin the third meeting of the Anglican-Oriental Orthodox International Commission in Cairo, I send you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ this short message of solidarity and encouragement.

The context in which you are meeting is one of heightened tension and conflict. Under the spreading violence and aggression, Christians and other religious groups in the Middle East are increasingly facing violations of the fundamental right and freedom to practice faith in their homelands. We are, therefore, all called to greater commitment and prayer for those persecuted and displaced communities in the region. Christians in these parts have been a continuing presence from the earliest days, contributing to the stability in the region. Now this presence and their role as mediators and reconcilers are under grave threat.

On 3rd September this year a meeting and service of prayer was held at Lambeth Palace with the theme Solidarity with Christians in the Middle East: Rejoicing in their Faith and Witness and Sharing in their Collective Pain. We gave thanks to God for our brothers and sisters as they continue to live their Christian faith in the Middle East with perseverance despite the immense challenges. We lifted our prayers for them and all who continue to face persecution. Their plight and struggles were and continue to be in the forefront of our minds, and within our ministry to our Churches and the wider community.

As you reflect on our communion faith in Christ, the common ground achieved and future steps, I pray that our theological dialogues for greater unity and closer fellowship will enable us to keep our focus on the importance of our common witness to the Gospel in our troubled world.

To our brothers and sisters in the Middle East, please be assured of our solidarity and our prayers that the living God will bring relief and liberation to the displaced and persecuted, and that those who promote the ways of conflict and oppression turn to the path of reconciliation.

It is in this spirit that I "share with you in Jesus the persecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance." Revelation 1:9.

The Most Revd Justin Welby

Archbishop of Canterbury

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