



## **Statement from the Bishops Conference**

The Bishops Conference of the Church of Norway expresses our deep concern for the Israeli authorities' plan to annex parts of the occupied West Bank. We support the statements from church leaders in Jerusalem and in the Middle East.

God calls us to create peace together, and contribute to justice for all people. Together with churches around the world, we are concerned that the annexation will destroy the opportunity for peace and justice for both Israelis and Palestinians. This concern is shared by many in the international political leadership, including several European leaders and the UN leadership.

If Israel moves toward a one-state solution with separate residential areas and differentiated rights, based on group affiliation, it will have very negative and dangerous consequences, not only for the Palestinians, but also for the Israeli society that is giving up the foundation of democracy: the rule of law and equal civil rights to all. This may lead to great tensions and more violence.

We are also deeply concerned about how such an action could have very negative consequences for Christians and for the future of the local church in this area. The global Church fellowship feels a special responsibility for Israel and Palestine, for historical and theological reasons. The Church of Norway, therefore, in collaboration with our Lutheran sister churches and the World Council of Churches, has a particularly close collaboration with the churches in Israel and Palestine, and a long-standing and strong commitment to peace and reconciliation in this region.

All people in the region have the same right to live in peace and to have their dignity and rights respected. Now it is crucial that the world community affirms that all countries must respect international law. The international legal order and universal human rights are mechanisms to protect both individuals and states from abuse and war, and tools to promote justice and peace.

We urge the Norwegian authorities to do whatever is possible through political and diplomatic efforts to prevent such annexation from happening, thus blocking the possibility of peace.

We encourage all people, regardless of faith and religion, to work for a lasting and just peace solution for both people. We continue to pray for peace for Jerusalem, and for all the people living there and in the surrounding areas.

*The Bishops Conference of the Church of Norway, 18. May 2020*