

Christians for Fair Witness On The Middle East Applauds The Efforts Of Holy Land Clergy Seeking Peaceful Co-Existence In Jerusalem

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There is a history of interreligious tension in Jerusalem, but recently there has been a noticeable rise in attacks on both people and holy sites. Last month the Christian cemetery on Mount Zion was vandalized, with tombstones toppled and stone crosses hacked into pieces. Mosques near Jerusalem have been attacked with anti-Islamic graffiti in so-called “price tag” attacks. Hundreds of Jews visiting the Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives have been attacked with rocks in less than one year.

Christians for Fair Witness On The Middle East (“Fair Witness”) applauds groups like The Council of Religious Institutions in the Holy Land which works “to prevent religion from being used as a source of conflict, and to promote mutual respect, a just and comprehensive peace and reconciliation between people of all faiths in the Holy Land and worldwide.”

But the Israeli government must also play its part in improving the situation and stopping the vandalism at holy sites according to Rev. Msgr. Dennis L. Mikulanis, STD, Vicar for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs for the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Diego and Fair Witness Executive Committee member. Msgr. Mikulanis, who has been on study leave in Jerusalem for several months, said, “I have witnessed the tensions first hand. I know Christians who have been spit at in the Old City. The monks at Dormition Abbey on Mt. Zion have reported that graffiti and vandalism of their property is a regular part of their lives. Not too long ago the tires of the abbey’s cars were slashed. Although the vandals were caught they were free on the streets again in less than 24 hours.”

Msgr. Mikulanis reflected: “This is a complicated country. It seems as if for each, the other simply doesn’t exist or, if the other does exist it seems to be problematic. What we don’t know, we fear. What we fear, we hate. What we hate we try to destroy. Dialogue and coming together of people of all faiths in good faith is critical if the Holy Land is going to continue to be a sacred place for Jews, Christians and Muslims.”