



To: Prof. Nicolas Levrat
UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues
8-14 Avenue de la Paix 1211 Genève 10, Switzerland

Date: November 21, 2023

Dear Mr. Levrat,

We are writing to express our deep concern about the extremely dangerous situation of the Christian Palestinians in northern Gaza. Specifically, we urgently request your intervention to safeguard the rights and well-being of innocent individuals belonging to this minority group by facilitating their immediate evacuation to a safe haven.

The conditions of violence, segregation, and exclusion of this minority group in Gaza are not new. In 2022, the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research conducted a public opinion poll among Palestinian Christians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The report of the survey shows that an overwhelming majority of 69% are worried about the presence of armed Palestinian factions such as Hamas. Additionally, two-thirds said they are worried about the fact that the Palestinian Basic Law refers to the principles of the Islamic Sharia as a main source of legislation and are concerned about the rise of political Islam as represented by Hamas, Islamic Jihad, al Tahrir Party, as well as extreme and conservatives in the Palestinian society.

Amidst the ongoing Israel-Gaza conflict, reports indicate that approximately 590 Christians are seeking shelter in the Catholic Church under the Latin Patriarchate in Gaza City, around 350 are taking refuge in the Greek Orthodox church, and an additional 53 are sheltering in private houses. These 1,000 Christian Palestinians have no safe haven in Gaza.

While the Israeli Defense Forces' policy urges Palestinians in and around Gaza City to seek refuge in southern Gaza in the next two days for safety and access to essential resources, this call does not ensure the safety of this particular minority group. Palestinian Christians fear for their lives if they relocate to southern Gaza. They believe that leaving the historic church buildings, their current safe havens in and around Gaza City, and relocating to the south would expose them to potential genocide. They are regarded as pagans, heathens, and idol-worshippers by Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and all Islamist terror organizations governing Gaza. They anticipate no mercy in the south, expecting Islamist extremists to perpetrate atrocities, including mutilation, torture, rape, and burning alive.

Under your mandate as the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, it is imperative to take immediate and decisive action by closely collaborating with the International Committee of the Red Cross. We urge the prompt evacuation of the 1,000 Christian Palestinians sheltered in Gaza City to a safe haven while providing them with the essential resources they need to



survive, such as access to food, clean water, and medical care. The International Committee of the Red Cross, a neutral entity established to safeguard and aid victims of armed conflicts and uphold International Humanitarian Law, operates effectively in Gaza. Its mission aligns with the Special Rapporteur's mandate to overcome existing obstacles to the full and effective realization of the rights of persons belonging to minorities in armed conflicts.

Sincerely,

Flavia Sevald
Chief Executive Officer

Adv. Uri Morad, Director of the International
Law & Public Diplomacy Department

CC: Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

William Schomburg, Head of Sub-Delegation for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Gaza.