

THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

LUTHERISCHER WELTBUND – FEDERACIÓN LUTERANA MUNDIAL – FÉDÉRATION LUTHÉRIENNE MONDIALE

Office of the General Secretary

H.E. Mr Yasser Arafat
President
Palestinian Authority

17 June 2002

Your Excellency,

It was a painful privilege for the members of the Lutheran World Federation's Executive Committee to meet with you at your compound in Ramallah on 7 June 2002.

The experience was a painful one, in that we saw with our own eyes the destruction which has been wrought on the infrastructure (including your own headquarters) and communities of the West Bank. Not even the graphic news footage which had been daily on our television screens had prepared us for the extent of the damage which we observed in our visit to your headquarters. And the nature and extent of the human suffering of which we learnt in Ramallah, Bethlehem, Beit Jala and the other communities we visited can only be described in tears.

And yet it was a privilege and an inspiration to see the resilience and hope with which you and your people continue to pursue your rights and legitimate aspirations in the midst of such destruction and desperation.

The desperate circumstances in which Palestinians find themselves under the increasingly oppressive military occupation is, of course, highly productive of desperate responses. We salute your leadership, especially in such circumstances, in denouncing suicide attacks upon civilians. The Lutheran World Federation rejects violence as a means of resolution of disputes. We particularly abhor armed violence against civilians. We hold together in our hearts especially the children, both Palestinian and Israeli, who have been the innocent victims of the vicious cycle of attack and counter-attack. We pray for you and the Israeli leadership to have the strength and wisdom to break this cycle of violence, for the sake of the children of both peoples who must otherwise inherit a legacy of hate.

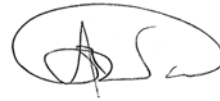
You should know that, even as your people suffer the brunt of violence, you are surrounded with the prayers of many millions around the world who pray for a just peace in the Holy Land, and for the realization of the cherished vision of Jerusalem as the shared city of two peoples and three faiths.

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In our meeting with you on 7 June, many of us who had been shocked and depressed by the destruction we encountered on entering your compound were inspired with fresh hope by your wise and determined words. We welcome the measures you are endeavouring to take to build confidence and to promote dialogue. We encourage you, and through you your people, not to lose heart but to remain resolute in your commitment to a just peace in your region - a peace which ultimately can only be achieved through dialogue and the slow building of understanding and trust between the two peoples now locked in conflict.

Yours respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, enclosed in a hand-drawn oval. The signature is stylized and appears to be 'Ishmael Noko'.

Ishmael Noko
General Secretary