WCC head calls proposal ‘ethnic cleansing’

World Council of Churches general secretary Jerry Pillay described President Trump’s proposal—for the U.S. take over the Gaza Strip, Palestinians to leave and the area be a new Riviera—as “tantamount to proposing full-scale ethnic cleansing and neo-colonization of the homeland of 2 million Palestinians in Gaza.”

**He said it violates every principle** of international humanitarian and human rights law, flouts decades of efforts by the international community, including the U.S., for a just, sustainable peace for the region. If implemented, he said it would constitute multiple international crimes and diminish the standing of the U.S. as a responsible member of the international community.

oikoumene.org/news/wcc-calls-on-president-trump-to-follow-international-law-for-a-just-peace-in-gaza

**Jerusalem church heads issue humanitarian plea**

In a Feb. 14 statement, the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem issued a humanitarian plea for Gaza. “As custodians of the Christian faith and conscience in this sacred land, we raise our voices in sorrow and steadfast resolve in the face of the ongoing suffering in Gaza. The devastation that has unfolded before the eyes of the world is a profound moral and humanitarian tragedy,” they said, noting that innocent lives have been lost, communities are in ruin and the most vulnerable endure unimaginable hardship.

“Amid this anguish, we speak against the grave threat of mass displacement, an injustice that strikes at the heart of human dignity,” they continued. “The people of Gaza, families who have lived for generations in the land of their ancestors, must not be forced into exile, stripped of whatever is left of their homes, heritage and right to remain in the land that forms the essence of their identity.

**“As Christians, we cannot be indifferent** to such suffering,” they said, calling also for the release of all captives and appealing to all people of faith, governments and the international community to act swiftly and decisively to halt this catastrophe.

They also call for an immediate humanitarian access to those in desperate need: “May the God of mercy strengthen the afflicted, soften the hearts of those in power and bring a peace that upholds justice, preserves human dignity and safeguards the presence of all people in the land to which they belong.”

Photo: Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem meeting on 14 February 2025.

Photo: Jerusalem Patriarchate

oikoumene.org/news/patriarchs-and-heads-of-churches-in-jerusalem-issue-humanitarian-plea-for-gaza

**WCC calls for reform in global tax system**

The World Council of Churches (WCC), global leaders, economists and faiths met in Vatican City for the High-Level Dialogue on Tax Justice and Solidarit. There, the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences called for urgent reforms in the global tax system. Affirming that tax justice can promote global equity and sustainability, they discussed the moral imperative of fair taxation to address economic inequality, climate change and debt burdens on the world’s most vulnerable nations.

Athena Peralta, director of the WCC Commission on Climate Justice and Sustainable Development, said, “The scandalous levels of inequality we see today destabilize efforts to fight runaway climate change. The wealthiest 10 percent is responsible for nearly half of global carbon emissions. Billionaire lifestyles—private jets, yachts—produce thousands of times the emissions of average persons. Their carbon footprint is a million times higher when we include emissions from their investments.”

**Speakers condemned the “structures of sin”**—tax havens and financial loopholes—that enable corporations and the ultra-wealthy to avoid paying their fair share of taxes. Presidents Lula da Silva of Brazil and Pedro Sánchez of Spain called for a new financial architecture with a UN Tax Convention to curb corporate tax avoidance and ensure fair taxation where profits are generated.

“With 2025 designated as a Jubilee Year by Pope Francis, the WCC said debt cancellation and tax justice must go hand in hand to address growing inequalities,” said Athena. “The link between tax justice, gender justice and climate justice reflects the biblical call for justice and stewardship. We urge faith communities to raise their prophetic voice to advocate for systemic reforms.”

WCC has the Zacchaeus Tax Campaign and broader advocacy efforts for tax justice. For information, visit oikoumene.org/resources/documents/calls-of-the-zacchaeus-tax-campaign.

oikoumene.org/news/wcc-calls-for-tax-justice-at-vatican-high-level-event