



THE ASSEMBLY OF CATHOLIC ORDINARIES OF THE HOLY LAND  
*Latins, Melkites, Maronites, Syrians, Armenians, Chaldeans, Custody of the Holy Land*

**Statement**  
**of the Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land**  
**on the Nation State Law,**  
**passed by the Israeli Knesset on July 19, 2018**

In the spirit of dialogue the Assembly of the Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land wishes to address the issue of the Nation State Law passed by the Israeli Knesset on July 19, 2018.

According to this law, the State of Israel has legislated that the people whose “welfare and safety” it is most concerned to promote and protect are limited to the Jewish citizens of the State of Israel. We must draw the attention of the authorities to a simple fact: our faithful, the Christians, our fellow citizens, Muslim, Druze and Baha’i, all of us who are Arabs, are no less citizens of this country than our Jewish brothers and sisters.

Since the promulgation of the Declaration of Independence in May 1948, the Arab citizens of the State of Israel have noted the tension that exists in the wording of the declaration about the State being both “Jewish” and “democratic”. Whereas the ever-changing equilibrium between these two terms has been worked out predominantly by the Jewish majority, the Arab minority has been struggling against all manifestations of discrimination whenever the “Jewish” element outbalanced the “democratic” element. This has meant an ongoing struggle and careful vigilance to protect the rights of all citizens, to guarantee as much as possible the values of equality, justice and democracy. The 1992 Israeli Knesset promulgation of the *Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty* was a milestone in the struggle to protect and promote these values.

However, the 2018 Israeli Knesset promulgation of the *Basic Law: Israel as the Nation State of the Jewish People* is a blow to these values. Although the law changes very little in practice, it does provide a constitutional and legal basis for discrimination among Israel’s citizens, clearly laying out the principles according to which Jewish citizens are to be privileged over and above other citizens. By promulgating “*the development of Jewish settlement as a national value and will act to encourage and promote its establishment and consolidation*”, the law promotes an inherent discriminatory vision. In fact, other than seriously downgrading the standing of the Arab language in relationship to the Hebrew language, the law totally ignores the fact that there is another people, the Palestinian Arabs, and other major religious communities, Christians and Muslims as well as Druze and Baha’i, that are profoundly rooted in this land.

Christians, Muslims, Druze, Baha’i and Jews, demand to be treated as equal citizens. This equality must include the respectful recognition of our civic (Israeli), ethnic (Palestinian Arab) and religious (Christian) identities, as both individuals and as communities. As Israelis and as Palestinian Arabs, we seek to be part of a state that promotes justice and peace, security and prosperity for all its citizens. As Christians, we take pride that the universal Church was founded in Jerusalem and her first faithful were children of this land and its people. We recognize that Jerusalem and the whole of this Holy Land is a heritage we share with Jews and Muslims, Druze and Baha’i, a heritage we are called upon to protect from division and internecine strife.

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This Basic Law contradicts the identifiable humanist and democratic strands in Israeli legislation as well as international laws and conventions to which Israel is signatory, having as their aim the promotion of human rights, the respect of diversity and the strengthening of justice, equality and peace. We, as the religious leaders of the Catholic Churches, call on the authorities to rescind this Basic Law and assure one and all that the State of Israel seeks to *promote and protect the welfare and the safety of all its citizens.*

The Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land

+ **Georges BACOUNI**

Gr. Melkite Cath. Arch. of Akko  
Acting president A.C.O.H.L.

+ **Moussa AL-HAGE**

Maronite Archbishop of Haifa  
Maronite Exarch of Jerusalem

+ **Pierbattista PIZZABALLA**

Apostolic Administrator of the  
Patriarchate of Jerusalem for Latins

+ **Youssef SOUEIF**

Maronite Archbishop of Cyprus

+ **Joseph GEBARA**

Gr. Melkite Cath. Arch. of Petra and  
Philadelphia (Amman)

+ **Michel SABBAH**

Former Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem  
President of Episc. Comm. Justice & Peace

+ **Fouad TWAL**

Former Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem

+ **Boutros MOUALLEM**

Former Gr. Melkite Cath. Arch. of Akko

+ **Elias CHACOUR**

Former Gr. Melkite Cath. Arch. of Akko

+ **Yaser Al-AYYASH**

Gr. Melkite Cath. Patriarchal Vicar

+ **Gregoire Pierre MELKI**

Syrian Catholic Exarch

+ **Krikor-Okosdinos COUSSA**

Armenian Catholic Exarch

+ **Giacinto-Boulos MARCUZZO**

Latin Patriarchal Vicar  
for Jerusalem & Palestine

+ **William SHOMALI**

Latin Patriarchal Vicar for Jordan

+ **Joseph Jules ZEREY**

Former Gr. Melkite Catholic  
Patriarchal Vicar of Jerusalem

+ **Kamal-Hanna BATHISH**

Former Auxiliary Bishop of the LPJ

+ **Selim SAYEGH**

Former Auxiliary Bishop of the LPJ

Fr. **Francesco PATTON**, OFM

Custos of the Holy Land

Fr. **Hanna KALDANI**

Latin Patriarchal Vicar for Israel

Fr. **Jerzey KRAJ**, OFM.

Latin Patriarchal Vicar for Cyprus

Fr. **Rafic NAHRA**.

Patriarchal Vicar for St James Vicariate

Fr. **Zaid HABBABA**

Chaldean Vicar General for Jordan

مجلس رؤساء الكنائس الكاثوليكية في الأرض المقدسة



אספת ההגמוניים הקתוליים  
של ארץ הקודש

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**Fr. Jean-Daniel GULLUNG, AA**  
Director of the Committee  
of the Religious Men

**Sr. Bruna FASAN**  
President of the Union of the  
Religious Superiors of Women

**Fr. Pietro FELET, scj**  
Secretary General

Jerusalem, 31<sup>st</sup> October 2018