



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE ALARABIYA NETWORK

Dear Friends,

I thank you for this opportunity to say a word to you at the end of Ramadan. This year, by a happy coincidence, the month sacred to Islam ends only a few days after the celebration of Easter, the most important religious feast for Christians.

This happy occasion, which invites us to lift our eyes to heaven and to worship the Lord, “merciful and almighty” (*Nostra Aetate*, 3), stands in sharp contrast with the sorrow we feel for the blood presently being shed in the blessed lands of the Middle East.

Brothers and sisters, our father Abraham raised his eyes to heaven to gaze at the stars. The light of life, which shines all around us and embraces us from on high, calls us to leave behind the dark night of hatred, so that, in accordance with the Creator’s will, stars may shine brightly upon our world, rather than the glare of missiles lighting up the heavens and raining down fire to devastate the earth!

God is peace and he desires peace. Those who believe in him cannot fail to repudiate war, which does not resolve but only increases hostilities. War, as I never tire of saying, is always and only a failure: it is a road leading nowhere; it does not open new vistas, but stifles all hope.

I suffer greatly because of the conflict in Palestine and Israel. May there be an immediate cease-fire in the Gaza Strip, where a humanitarian catastrophe is ongoing. May aid be allowed to reach the Palestinian people who are suffering greatly, and may the hostages taken in October be released! I think too of war-torn Syria, Lebanon and the entire Middle East. Let us not allow the flames of resentment to spread, fanned by the baleful winds of the arms race! Let us not allow war to spread! Let us put an end to the inertia of evil!

I think constantly of the families, the young people, the workers, the elderly and the children. I am certain that in their hearts, in the hearts of ordinary people, there is a great desire for peace. And

that, amid the spread of violence, tears flow from their eyes and a single word issues from their lips: Enough! Enough! – I myself repeat that word to those who bear the grave responsibility of governing nations. Enough! Stop! Please, put an end to the clash of arms and think of the children, all the children, as you do your own children. Let us all look to the future with the eyes of children. They do not ask who is the enemy to be destroyed, but who are the friends with whom they can play. They need homes, parks and schools, not tombs and mass graves.

Friends, I believe that deserts can flower: as in nature, so too in the hearts of individuals and in the lives of peoples. Yet the deserts of hatred can bring forth shoots of hope only if we learn how to grow together, one alongside the other; only if we learn to respect the beliefs of others; only if we recognize the right to existence of every people and the right of every people to have their own State; only if we learn how to live in peace without demonizing anyone. That is my belief and my hope, which I share with the Christians who, amid not a few difficulties, are living throughout the Middle East. I embrace them and I encourage them, and I ask that they enjoy always and everywhere the right and ability to profess freely their faith, which speaks of peace and fraternity.

I thank you for your attention. I greet you with affection and I assure you that the Middle East continues to have a special place in my heart. I wish each of you all good things and the blessings of the Most High. *Shukran!* (Thank you!)

From the Vatican, 12 April 2024

FRANCIS