



The Holy See

*MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

The particular concern I bear towards Lebanon and the alarming news that continues to come from this bloodstained land once again induce me to address myself to Your Excellency.

After so many years of assaults which have sowed only devastation, intolerance and sorrow, it appears that still more tragic events are to be feared.

Every day, bloody combats, unspeakable stories of human suffering and appeals for help coming from all parts and from all the communities can only revive a profound sorrow in my heart.

The Lebanese population, tried by this long state of war, seems to have reached the extreme limit of endurance, and no one can remain insensitive to so much suffering and destruction. It is impossible to remain passive before the profoundly moving spectacle of these families compelled to leave their homes and their property, pursued and as it were doomed to reprisals of every kind.

What is happening in the south of the country - I am thinking in particular of the Christian populations and of the risks incurred by all those who have found refuge at Jezzine - the indiscriminate bombings that are battering Beirut and the anarchy that is gradually taking hold of all sectors of social life lead one to believe that such a situation, if it continues, could become fatal to the survival of this country.

In this context, one can only share the fears of the Lebanese people themselves - Christian and Muslim - when they see the gulf widening between the various communities, the extreme positions becoming more embittered and the whole identity of the nation on the verge of disappearing.

Convinced that such an outcome is not inevitable, knowing the Lebanese will to live and confident in the solidarity of so many men of good will, I continue to spare no effort in appealing to the

conscience of the nations and of their leaders regarding this matter, so that Lebanon may once again become itself. I see this as a commitment that derives of course from my mission as Shepherd, concerned first of all for so many of his sons who are prey to the greatest afflictions and who often have the feeling of being misunderstood and forgotten.

Also involved here is a duty of fidelity towards the One who proclaimed for all men the beatitude of peace and who desires in this way to help toward a discernment capable of inciting all those who have any power of decision - in Lebanon as elsewhere - to concretely involve themselves in discouraging enmities, fear and violence.

The Organization of the United Nations, by reason of its size and its international responsibilities, appears to be a platform particularly suited for broadcasting an appeal which would in some sense be the voice of all the Lebanese people who are tempted to despair: do not abandon Lebanon; help its people to lay the foundations of a clear dialogue for the building of a truly renewed country!

I am confident, Mr. Secretary General, that the United Nations Organization, up to its highest agencies, will accept my overture and will set in motion every possible measure aimed at co-ordinating the concrete and urgent initiatives required by such a complex situation. I am persuaded, moreover, that this same Organization will not hesitate to intensify its participation in the establishment of peace on the field, by way of an extended presence of the forces it has maintained in Lebanon for some years now and which assume a particularly important mission.

In sharing these reflections and these aspirations with the Secretary General of the United Nations Organization, I cherish the hope that they will reach a large audience and that thereby a stimulus will be given to the good will of all those who, in the society of the nations, still believe in the values represented by Lebanon and who truly desire to see the end of this long agony. Moreover, confidence and courage will be restored to so many Lebanese people who aspire, in their own country as in the whole of the Middle East, to a future of coexistence based on mutual understanding among the communities and the peoples of the region.

Counting on your influence and your moral authority, I ask you, Mr. Secretary General, to kindly accept the renewed assurance of my sentiments of highest regard.

From the Vatican, 7 May 1985

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