



## The Holy See

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***MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II  
TO JAVIER PÉREZ DE CUELLAR,  
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS\****

To His Excellency Mr Javier Pérez de Cuellar Secretary General of the United Nations

As you know, on 4-5 March, I met with the Patriarchs of the Catholic Churches of the Middle East and representatives of the bishops' conferences of the countries that were most involved in the recent Gulf war. This meeting was convoked in order to promote an exchange of information and an evaluation of the various negative consequences of the conflict, as well as to seek together the most opportune initiatives that would allow their solution.

It was primarily a meeting of pastors, united by their common concern for the situation and the future of the Christian communities of the Middle East who, as you know, are minorities within societies which have a Muslim or Jewish majority.

The first intention which appeared was that of pursuing and developing dialogue between Christians and Muslims and between Christians and Jews, in the firm hope that it will lead to better mutual understanding, to mutual trust and a concrete collaboration permitting all the communities to express their faith freely and to have the full right to participate in the construction of the societies in which they live.

Furthermore, they manifested their conviction that a sincere interreligious dialogue, developing in an atmosphere of authentic freedom of religion could contribute notably to the pursuit of justice and the guarantee of peace, which the region of the Middle East needs so much.

The patriarchs and bishops did not fail to refer to the role of the international community and expressed their great esteem for the Secretary General of the United Nations. They think that during this present period, following the Gulf war, a great deal of good will and effort is needed to face the problems: those which have arisen or amassed due to the conflict and those which have

existed for a long time in the region and which still have no solution.

The bishops of the Catholic Churches of the Middle East and the West have confidence in the work of the United Nations and they hope that the negotiations for a just peace in the Gulf will not cause humiliation to anyone, nor punishment for any people whatsoever. At the same time, they hope that, through the United Nations and its specialized organizations, those whom the recent war has placed in a situation of acute need will not fail to find international sensitivity and solidarity.

Naturally, during the meeting the other great problems of the Middle East were discussed, in particular those concerning the Palestinian people and the Lebanese, problems which persist in all their stark reality despite the many United Nations' resolutions. The bishops expect an energetic international commitment to open as soon as possible a concrete path towards the solution of these problems, in such a way that the peoples of the region will have their rights and legitimate aspirations recognized so that they may live harmoniously in peace.

The patriarchs and bishops also turned their attention to the city of Jerusalem, the fear that the desired political negotiations on the subject of the region's problems might cause a loss of interest in the Holy City and its special characteristics, and that the demands deriving from these might not be taken sufficiently into consideration.

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*\*L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n. 13 p.2.*

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