



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

August 6, 2018

Bishop Sani-Ibrahim Azar
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land
P.O. Box 14076 – Muristan Road
Jerusalem 91140

Your Grace,

For some months we have been aware of discussions within Israel which culminated last month in the Knesset's adoption of a measure entitled "Basic Law: Israel as the Nation State of the Jewish People".

Like you, I am quite disturbed about several aspects of this new law. It excludes ethnic and religious groups that have been living in this land for centuries, restricts the international human right to self-determination solely for Jews within Israel, determines the status of Jerusalem outside of any negotiation or international agreement, sets forth one language as that of a multilingual nation, and encourages Jewish settlement, which appears to be not restricted to within the de facto pre-1967 borders. A number of these provisions effectively codify a second-class status for all who are not Jews, yet who are citizens or residents of areas under the control of the State of Israel. This is a violation of fundamental democratic principles and internationally-recognized human rights.

This action does not advance a future of peace with justice for Israelis and Palestinians; quite the opposite. It will only exacerbate tensions and make for less security among the inhabitants of the Holy Land. It also contrasts with several long-standing ELCA commitments with regard to Israel and Palestine such as reaching "a negotiated, final status agreement, which includes a 'shared Jerusalem' that can serve as a capital to both Palestine and Israel, with access by and full rights in the city for Jews, Christians, and Muslims."

I join your call for the Knesset to rescind this law, and I appeal to all people of good will to do the same. I call upon my own elected officials to object to this law and its intent. I encourage the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and our ecumenical and inter-religious partners to continue together in the urgent pursuit of a future of peace with justice in Israel and Palestine.

I will continue to pray for your church and all of the people in Palestine and Israel that mutual understanding and respect will prevail soon -- despite this immediate regressive act. May positive, corrective steps soon be taken to recognize the inherent dignity and inalienable rights of every person residing in the Holy Land.

In God's peace,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America