



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

July 18, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, I join our colleagues in the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and its Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) in Jerusalem in expressing our deep appreciation for your visit to the hospital last Friday.

Your heartfelt words concerning the dignity of the Palestinian people and your tangible pledge of support for their continuing health care is a shared affirmation. Your announcement of a multiyear commitment of \$100 million to the East Jerusalem Hospitals Network (EJHN) is much welcomed. We commit our church to supporting this pledge by reinforcing the message to Congress that this humanitarian assistance is vital for Palestinians in need and should not be delayed or impaired by any political considerations.

We fully agree with your words that “Palestinians and Israelis deserve equal measure of freedom, security, prosperity, and dignity. And access to healthcare when you need it is essential to living a life of dignity for all of us.” As a member church of the LWF, and therefore a partner of AVH, we sincerely hope that this kind of support will continue because it will increase the EJHN’s sustainability and its capacity to offer much-needed medical care to Palestinians in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza.

I would be remiss if I did not take this occasion to draw your attention to the [letter](#) conveyed to you last Friday from my colleague who attended your remarks, Bishop Ibrahim Azar of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. Bishop Azar outlines the wider context for the Palestinian community in which the East Jerusalem hospitals function. He strongly appeals for remedial action in response to “physical and verbal assaults against priests and other clergy, attacks on Christian churches, with holy sites regularly vandalized and desecrated, and ongoing intimidation of local Christians who simply seek to worship freely and go about their daily lives.” I share his concerns about these incidents and join in his call upon you to work with the government of Israel to address the law banning the unification of Palestinian families.

Mr. President, as a Christian theologian, I agree with you and others that “Hope springs eternal.” Many of us — regardless of whether we live in the Holy Land, this country or elsewhere — found our hope for peace with justice in the Holy Land bolstered by your visit last week in support of the East Jerusalem Hospitals Network. It confirmed that we must recommit ourselves to recognizing the inherent dignity of each person, as God does, and to standing with and caring for the well-being of one another — as your father said, “no matter what their circumstance.” Thank you once again.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth A. Eaton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

cc: Dr. Jill Biden
Ambassador Thomas R. Nides
Samantha Power, U.S. Agency for International Development
Megan Doherty, U.S. Agency for International Development