
Source: *The Guardian*, Harriet Sherwood, 4th May 2017

Archbishop of Canterbury makes surprise visit to Gaza

Justin Welby visits medical facilities and lays wreath at first world war cemetery after being granted Israeli permits to enter Gaza Strip



Image 1: Welby described his short visit to the densely populated and impoverished Palestinian territory as 'extraordinary'. Photograph: Ariel Schalit/AP

The archbishop of Canterbury has made a surprise visit to [Gaza](#) during his 12-day tour of the Holy Land.

[Justin Welby](#) spent three and a half

hours in the Gaza Strip, which has been the scene of repeated conflicts over the past decade and is governed by the militant group Hamas.

The archbishop, who was accompanied by the Anglican bishop of Jerusalem, Suheil Dawani, and two aides, was granted Israeli permits and given security clearance at the last minute, after earlier this week seeking permission to enter the Gaza Strip.

Welby described his short visit to the densely populated and impoverished territory as "extraordinary". About 1.9 million Palestinians live in Gaza, which is surrounded on three sides by walls and fences and blockaded by the Israeli navy along its coastline.

Gaza has a tiny, mostly Orthodox, Christian population of about 3,000. Although they have faced intimidation and threats from some Islamist groups in the past, they are tolerated by Hamas, which has ruled Gaza for the past 10 years.



Image 2: Archbishop Suheil, far left, and Archbishop Welby, second from left, at the Commonwealth War Cemetery in Gaza. Photograph: Supplied

In Gaza City, Welby visited St John' Eye hospital and al-Ahli Arab hospital, which is under the auspices of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem. The archbishop, who led a service in the hospital chapel, said

the “generous humanitarian care” was inspiring.

He also laid a wreath at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery, which is home to more than 3,000 graves from the first world war. Welby’s maternal grandfather fought in Gaza.

Gaza is in the middle of a power crisis, with residents facing blackouts of up to 20 hours a day, according to the UN. The Palestinian Authority, based in Ramallah in the West Bank, has said it is to [stop paying for electricity](#) supplied to the Strip. The PA’s intention is to put pressure on Hamas.

During his trip, Welby is to visit Bethlehem to meet the city’s Christian mayor, Vera Baboun. He will also meet Palestinian Christians whose homes, land and livelihoods have been adversely affected by the huge concrete wall that cuts Bethlehem and adjacent villages off from Jerusalem. He also plans to visit the West Bank city of Hebron.

- This article was amended on 5 May 2017 to clarify when Welby sought permission to enter the Gaza Strip.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/may/08/archbishop-of-canterbury-grief-sorrow-palestinians-bethlehem>

Source: Guardian, Harriet Sherwood, 8th May 2017

Archbishop of Canterbury expresses 'grief and sorrow' at plight of Palestinians

[Justin Welby listens to testimonies of Palestinian Christians who lost land after building of vast wall near Bethlehem](#)



Image 3: Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby walks in Jerusalem’s Old City on a visit to the Holy Land. Photograph: Ammar Awad/Reuters

Justin Welby, the archbishop of Canterbury, has spoken of his “profound grief and sorrow” after hearing the testimonies of Palestinians whose land has

been put beyond their reach by the vast concrete wall Israel has built near Bethlehem.

After saying prayers for the people of Bethlehem and neighbouring Beit Jala in the shadow of the eight-metre high separation barrier, Welby said: “You cannot come and hear the testimonies I heard, you cannot hear from the people who live here, without your heart becoming heavier and heavier, and more and more burdened, with that sense of people whose history has led them to a place where all they have known is disintegrating.”

He added: "As always in these times, it is the weak, the poor who are shoved to the side. The emotional reaction is one of profound grief and sorrow, and of prayer that there will be justice and security for all."

Welby was visiting Bethlehem as part of a 12-day tour of the Holy Land. In the Cremisan valley, home to a community of Salesian monks and nuns, Palestinian Christians told him of the impact of the separation barrier following its construction over the past two years after a decade-long court battle.

The local mayor, William Shaer, said one of the oldest Christian communities in the world was struggling for the right to self-determination. "Today, the vast majority of our people live in the diaspora. But we are staying here. Cremisan has become a symbol for all people," he said.

The Balfour declaration, in which the British government supported the establishment in Palestine of a "national home" for the Jewish people 100 years ago, was "one of the darkest acts of colonialism ever seen", Shaer told Welby. The Palestinians wanted an apology, but "instead [the British] are preparing for a celebration" he said.

Suhaila Abu Sa'ad, 67, said her olive and fruit trees, only 20 metres from her home but on the other side of the wall, could be accessed only by a long drive via a checkpoint. "I can't express how angry I am. Now we depend only on God," she said.

Construction of the barrier near Cremisan began in August 2015 at the conclusion of a legal battle waged by the monastery, convent and local landowners. A gate in the wall, intended to allow farmers to access their land, had never been opened, residents said. In 2004, the international court of justice ruled the barrier illegal where it was routed on Palestinian land.

Welby told Cremisan representatives that there were "limits to what the church can do ... but we can speak out and remind people of the need for justice and security". He would raise his concerns with "people in power both here and in the UK".

Earlier, in an interview with the Guardian and Christian Today, the archbishop said the time may come when parties seeking a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict needed to include Hamas in talks.

Speaking after a visit to the Hamas stronghold of Gaza last week, Welby said: "In any place where there's serious conflict, there's a point where you need to talk to everyone, but it has got to be the point where you can make some progress."

In line with British government policy, Welby and his aides did not meet Hamas officials on their brief visit to Gaza. But talks with extremists on both sides of the conflict – Hamas and hardline Israeli settlers – should not be ruled out, Welby said.

"There's a moment, which I'm not saying is now, when it is possible for it to bring rewards. But the moment is not any moment – you can do it at exactly the wrong time and cause a complete meltdown and undermine all the resistance to extremism. And, secondly, the result [can be] the people in the middle become more disempowered, and you end up privileging those who cause the most difficulty, you reward bad behaviour by attention."

The British government, along with the EU and the US, adopted a policy of not talking to Hamas after the faction won Palestinian elections in 2006 and took control of Gaza the following year. However, some politicians and diplomats now believe that was misguided. Pointing to the experience of the IRA in Northern Ireland, they say there can be no resolution to the conflict without including Hamas in peace talks.

Welby said people in Gaza told him they felt forgotten by the rest of the world. It was "a place that

feels profoundly isolated and besieged ... the place where you felt all the problems of the area come together most clearly”.

Beyond humanitarian help, “there’s no obvious fix that is within anyone’s grasp at the moment. There are things that governments could do, but they’re not practically do-able in the sense that people have the courage or the confidence.”

He said that the three great monotheistic faiths of the Holy Land – **Christianity**, Judaism and Islam – must find a way of co-existence. “I believe emphatically and determinedly and without hesitation that they must find a way of living together. The idea of a religious apartheid, of separate development, would be a catastrophe because this region sets the pattern for so many other parts of the world.”

He added: “It’s going to require enormous leadership from within each of the religious traditions. And it requires a new form of integrity in which religious leaders takes responsibility for failures within their traditions.”

In the past decade or so, “there’s been a total breakdown of the capacity of human beings to live alongside one another. But in the Middle East, it’s happened before and it’s been put right before, and there have been new moments of hope. So that’s our prayer. And that’s what we have to take responsibility for leading.”

<https://www.christiantoday.com/article/archbishop.of.canterbury.in.jerusalem.laments.suffering.and.persecution.says.christians.can.hep.heal.the.region/108542.htm>

Source: Christian Today, James Macintyre, May 7th 2017

Archbishop of Canterbury in Jerusalem laments 'suffering and persecution,' says Christians can help heal the region



Image 4: Justin Welby preaching at St George's Cathedral in east Jerusalem

Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has preached a powerful sermon in Jerusalem declaring that the presence of Christians is 'essential to the life and hope of this whole area'.

Addressing the Anglican faithful at a packed St George's Cathedral in east Jerusalem, the Archbishop lamented the 'all consuming' suffering felt by the

church in the region, where 'Christians especially are experiencing persecution' and 'are especially threatened'.

But in an ultimately uplifting ten minute sermon based on the theme of 'abundant life' promised by Jesus and delivered hours before he was to be installed as an Episcopal Canon at the Anglican Cathedral, Archbishop Welby said: 'The life of Christ changes everything, every aspect of our lives. It is not only in the areas of prayer and worship, not for the internal life of the church only'.

He went on: 'Here in this region is a deep need for healing, for hope, for righteousness of life, and for human dignity in security and without fear. The presence of Christians here both needs...abundant life if the church is to remain, but also is essential to the life and hope of this whole area. We pray for you, grieve for you, hope with you, and will seek in the best ways we can, to support you so that we all share the abundant life of Christ.'

Welby outlined some of the experiences that have most touched him so far during his comprehensive 12-day visit to the Holy Land, a trip that he emphasised was first and foremost pastoral.

'You know the fury of being treated wrongly,' he said. 'Even on a brief visit here, with very little understanding of probably the most complicated region of conflicts in the world, one sees the passions raised by suffering and injustice. Whether it is the utterly disrupted lives of the refugees we met in Zatar refugee camp [in Jordan] last week, or the tears of the Iraqi Christians later that day, seemingly forgotten by the world, one sees endless heart-break.'

'In Gaza there is heroism from the doctors at the hospitals, from patients and above all groups of women, but also the ever looming fears. In Nazareth, across Galilee you hear the voices of anger, or of fear and insecurity, of division and of the impact of almost a century of struggle and conflict, that affect every inhabitant of the region, all of who tell their stories of fear, of struggle.'

Welby jointly presided over the Eastertide Communion service at St. George's, which has the appearance of a quiet corner of Kent in the midst of the divided Holy City, with the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem, Suheil Dawani, assisted by the Dean Hosam Naoum.



Image 5: Archbishop Justin Welby visits the three main holy sites in the Old City of Jerusalem with Archbishop Suheil Dawani, 3rd May 2017.

To the sound of the anthem 'Jesus Remember Me When You Come Into Your Kingdom,' the Archbishop of Canterbury administered Communion wafers to dozens of Anglicans including

Palestinian Christians at the end of the service which was held jointly in Arabic and English.

Before his sermon, he thanked the Bishop and the Dean for allowing him to preach. 'I've been a dean,' he joked. 'I know what a nuisance it is.'

Later, to laughter from the congregation of several hundred Welby presented gifts to Bishop Dawani and Dean Naoum, telling those gathered as he approached the lecturn: 'Don't look so worried – I'm not going to preach another sermon.'

Speaking to the BBC Radio 4 Sunday programme after the service, Welby said that his visit to Gaza was 'genuinely breathtaking - something I'll never forget'.

In what appears to be a meticulously balanced trip, the Archbishop has so far visited the refugee camp in Jordan, received a warm welcome at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem's Old City, visited the Dome of the Rock, prayed at the Western Wall with the UK's Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mervis before speaking out against anti-Semitism at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial museum, and made his surprise visit to Gaza.

This evening Welby will be given the honour of being installed as Episcopal Canon at St. George's, in a move aimed at building on Anglican unity, during an Evensong service before attending an ecumenical gathering of church leaders from across Jerusalem.

Tomorrow the Archbishop will travel to Bethlehem and meet with Palestinian Christians including the city's Christian Mayor Vera Baboun who is expected to brief him on the plight of Christians there, whose lives are affected by the imposing separation barrier which cuts through the West Bank and surrounding Israeli settlements. Later this week, he will also visit the West Bank city of Hebron.

In a series of political meetings, Welby is also set to meet the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Reuven Rivlin, and is hoping to meet the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/archbishop-of-canterbury-says-mideast-peace-talks-will-need-to-include-hamas/>

Source: The Times of Israel. Stuart Winer, 8th May 2017

Archbishop of Canterbury says Mideast peace talks may need to include Hamas

Justin Welby, in the Holy Land, stresses timing of such talks must be right to bring rewards, because otherwise there is the risk of 'a complete meltdown'



Image 6: Justin Welby, the archbishop of Canterbury, talks to fellow Anglican leaders in Amman, Jordan, May 2, 2017. (AP/Sam McNeil)

The Archbishop of Canterbury said Monday that in order for Israeli-Palestinian peace talks to reach a deal there may

need to be a seat at the table for the Hamas terrorist group, but cautioned the timing must be right or disaster could ensue.

Justin Welby, on a 10-day tour of the holy land, spoke to the British Guardian newspaper and Christian Today, after having visited the Gaza Strip last week.

“The archbishop said the time may come when parties seeking a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict needed to include Hamas in talks,” the Guardian reported, and then quoted Welby saying: “In any place where there’s serious conflict, there’s a point where you need to talk to everyone, but it has got to be the point where you can make some progress.”

Including extremists in talks — both Palestinian and Israeli — should be kept as an option, Welby reportedly suggested, apparently referring to hard-line settler groups on the Israeli side.

When in Gaza, Welby, the head of the church in England, did not meet with Hamas members in keeping in line with British government policy. Hamas is recognized as a terror group by Israel, the US and the EU. Israel has repeatedly said it will not negotiate with Hamas, which calls for Israel’s destruction, until it renounces violence and recognizes Israel.

“There’s a moment, which I’m not saying is now, when it is possible for it to bring rewards. But the moment is not any moment — you can do it at exactly the wrong time and cause a complete meltdown and undermine all the resistance to extremism.”

That can then lead to a situation in which “the people in the middle become more disempowered, and you end up privileging those who cause the most difficulty, you reward bad behavior by attention,” Welby warned.