



GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

"One must not wait for good news to continue building"



Analyzing the inauspicious events that shook the Holy Land in May, Father Rafic Nahra, Patriarchal Vicar of the Hebrew-speaking Catholic community of Israel, within the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, notes "very strong and unexpected tensions between Arabs and Jews," as well as acts of organized violence in Lod, Ramleh, and Haifa.

The priest points out that, on the Arab side, "many parents no longer control their children of the 'Tik Tok generation', some profess no faith and have lost all respect for their elders."

"The settling of scores within the Arab community cause an increasing number of victims and the Israeli security services seem to leave it at that," he adds, concerned about the seriousness of the situation, especially as certain troublemakers who have sprung up, from who knows where, come to sow havoc and disorder in the neighborhoods of the cities where until now coexistence has worked well.

"The silent majority is afraid, but I must say that a part of the Arab population is very angry about the double standard in Israel: the Palestinians do not have the right to recover their lands, but the Jews legally have the possibility," Father Rafic points out. Thus, he recalls, Israeli police recently forced some Palestinians to leave their homes in East Jerusalem, stating that these belonged to Jews before 1948; moreover, Muslims were prevented from going to pray at the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the day that Jews celebrated "Jerusalem Unification Day," May 10, the date commemorating the conquest of the Holy City - including the Old City - during the Six-Day War (1967).

Such provocations broke the fragile coexistence that had been established for some years, offering Hamas a pretext to relaunch the war against Israel. The hostilities - which lasted about ten days this spring - claimed several lives in the Hebrew-speaking Catholic community: an Indian woman caring for an elderly woman in Ashkelon and two Thai workers were killed by rocket attacks.

"In the midst of the drama, however, people we know and support continue to make fraternal gestures, such as some Arab and Jewish doctors in Israel who co-produced a video to manifest their willingness to live together," the Patriarchal Vicar recounts, also mentioning "an evening at the Tower of David, near the Jaffa Gate, attended by representatives of the three Abrahamic religions, on the theme of mutual responsibility, that mutual responsibility harshly contradicted and humiliated in the days that followed." In spite of everything, "we must not wait for good news to continue building", concludes Father Rafic, who is eager to continue his action with the Vicariate team, in order to establish interpersonal relationships based on trust and aimed at progressively changing the mentality. In this perspective, the prayer of the members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre throughout the world remains for him an essential spiritual support.

François Vayne

(May 2021)