



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

Christians and Muslims demonstrating together: interview with Father Jamal Khader, parish priest of Ramallah



In Ramallah, as in Bethlehem, Christmas trees were not lit in protest, the Christmas market was momentarily suspended, and the festivities in the (few) parishes in the Palestinian Territories were cancelled. People spontaneously took to the streets after President Trump's shock announcement. Christians and Muslims demonstrated together. As one. In Ramallah's main square, the Catholic parish priest, Father Jamal Khader, tells of having marched alongside the mayor and other religious authorities. "Today there was a general strike and there were clashes between the youth and the army. The atmosphere is explosive".

Did you demonstrate?

"Yes obviously. East Jerusalem is both an Arab and Christian city, not a religious issue. Trump's announcement is something that goes against the Palestinian people who, as we know, are both Christian and Muslim. Trump's statement therefore touches the future and peace of our country".

What do you imagine could happen in the next days?

"Trump's announcement will have ripple effects throughout the Middle East. The US administration will be seen as the enemy making decisions in favour of the State of Israel".

Will there be a return to the days of the Intifada?

"The question is serious. Everything will depend on the response that all Palestinians will give. In the meantime, we know that the diplomacies of half the world are moving and we hope that they can stigmatize the US decision since it not only affects the Palestinians in the Holy Land. Nobody wants a senseless violence. Even the Palestinian police is trying to calm people, saying that this is a passing thing. But we are all worried".

Do we need more diplomatic pressure on the US and Israel?

"We in the church of Ramallah pray. And prayers are a powerful weapon. Then diplomacy is in action. The other morning there was a Palestinian delegation at the Vatican. We know that all the leaders of the Christian Churches present in the Holy Land sent letters to President Trump. Lutherans, Evangelicals, Orthodox, Armenians. The issue is not religious and no religion will ever give room for illegal or terrorist actions. This is not the West against the Islamic world. Can I add something?".

Sure...

"I would like to make an appeal to the Pope and to all the Catholics since it will soon be Christmas. I would like to say that we Christians who live here need the solidarity of the whole Church. Here you have brothers and sisters who are suffering not so much because they are Christians, but because they are Palestinians".

How many Catholics are there in Ramallah?

"The Catholic parish has 500 families, about 2,000 faithful out of a population of 55 thousand people. Together with the Catholics, however, there is a community of Orthodox and then there are the Anglicans".

Franca Giansoldati

Source: Il Messaggero

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