



## Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Pope Francis Sign Joint Declaration

The two leaders recalled with joy and gratitude their recent encounter in Jerusalem to commemorate the 50th anniversary since the meeting there of their predecessors, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras. They also referred to visits to the Phanar by their predecessors, Popes John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI.

However, two-thirds of the statement was dedicated to the crisis in the Middle East, the “ecumenism of suffering” especially in Iraq and Syria, as well as the conflict in Ukraine. The two primates underlined:

*We cannot resign ourselves to a Middle East without Christians, who have professed the name of Jesus there for two thousand years. Many of our brothers and sisters are being persecuted and have been forced violently from their homes. It even seems that the value of human life has been lost, that the human person no longer matters and may be sacrificed to other interests. And, tragically, all this is met by the indifference of many.*

With regard to the dialogue with Islam, the Pope and the Patriarch noted:

*The grave challenges facing the world in the present situation require the solidarity of all people of good will, and so we also recognize the importance of promoting a constructive dialogue with Islam based on mutual respect and friendship. Inspired by common values and strengthened by genuine fraternal sentiments, Muslims and Christians are called to work together for the sake of justice, peace and respect for the dignity and rights of every person, especially in those regions where they once lived for centuries in peaceful coexistence and now tragically suffer together the horrors of war.*

Finally, the two leaders expressed their concern about the ongoing crisis in Ukraine:

*We also remember all the people who experience the sufferings of war. In particular, we pray for peace in Ukraine, a country of ancient Christian tradition, while we call upon all parties involved to pursue the path of dialogue and of respect for international law in order to bring an end to the conflict and allow all Ukrainians to live in harmony.*