



14. February 2024

*To Bishop Dr. Sami Ibrahim Azar and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land
from the Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark*

Following the meeting of the Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark on the 5th of September 2024, we would like to express our continued compassion with all victims of the recent terror and war in Israel and Palestine. We acknowledge the continued mission of your church in bearing witness to the grace of God in this difficult situation not least in terms of your diaconal work. We are writing to share two concerns with you:

First, we believe that Israel as occupation force has the responsibility to protect the Palestinian people and religious communities on equal basis as other citizens. From our international ecclesial networks, we have received the news that the municipal governments in several Israeli towns plan to introduce a new local tax on property owned by faith communities. We are aware that such a tax might contribute to the increased discrimination against Christians in Israel, a fact that Denmark as well as other European countries have noticed as recent as 2nd May 2024 (Statement: Mount Zion – Local EU Statement on the Christian Presence in Jerusalem).

From correspondence with our Ministry of Foreign Affairs we know that the minister is aware of and closely monitors the situation of religious minorities in Israel. In a letter dated 5. September, the minister of foreign affairs Lars Løkke Rasmussen expresses his concern about increased discrimination against Christian minorities including limiting access to churches and places of worship. We are not sure to what extent the new tax will affect the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. However, if the planned local tax affects your financial situation or future access to places of worship, we would be interested in learning how we best can be of help in this situation in terms of advocacy in relation to our ministry of foreign affairs, our parliamentarians or our national media.

Secondly, we are pleased to let you know that we are planning a national campaign in our church encouraging congregations across Denmark to pray and donate to the diaconal work of your church on Sunday 6th October. It will be a direct mail campaign explaining the social situation of your church and the character of your diaconal work in congregations and communities. We kindly ask your practical advice on which IBAN numbers and SWIFT codes we should use.

Yours in Christ