



## **Mutual respect and advancing relations between Cyprus and Israel**

Joint declaration of Archbishop Chrysostomos and Rabbi Yona Metzger, the chief rabbi of Israel

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Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger signed a historic declaration on December 6, 2011, in Nicosia, Cyprus, with Archbishop Chrysostomos, primate of the Church of Cyprus, in which both of them promised to deepen relations between the Church and the Jewish people. The declaration affirms the illegitimacy of the doctrine of collective Jewish guilt for the deicide of Jesus. It was the first time an Orthodox church has explicitly repudiated this doctrine, which was one of the most important factors in the development of religious anti-Semitism in Europe. The joint declaration reads as follows:

The thousands of years historical connections between the People of Cyprus and the Jewish People have assumed a new modern fraternity since the establishment of the State of Israel. At the same time, new relationships of mutual respect have developed between Christian and Jewish communities.

We, the Chief Rabbi of Israel, Yona Metzger and the Archbishop of Cyprus Chrysostomos, give thanks to God for the blessed increase of this mutual respect and affirm our commitment to advancing these excellent relations between Cyprus and Israel.

We acknowledge with regret that such relations were not always the case everywhere in the past, and we thus condemn all acts of disrespect towards any other religious community, its integrity and its Holy sites.

We should note, however, that the Church and the People of Cyprus were not party to the systematic negation of Jewry nor of accusations of collective guilt of deicide and we accordingly affirm the repudiation of such prejudice as incompatible with the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. We should further note that the People of Israel have never committed acts of aggression against the People of Cyprus and have demonstrated their continued support for the latter.

Furthermore, we judge that any attempts to undermine the religious identity and attachments of the other, are incompatible with the spirit of mutual respect and thus we deplore all proselytising activity irrespectively from where and by whom it is exercised.

Above all, we affirm our respective religions' teachings regarding the sanctity of life and dignity of the human person - each one created in the Divine Image; and accordingly we condemn all acts that desecrate this sanctity, in particular violence and terror against innocents and especially when this involves the abuse of the name of God and religion.

We pledge to work together for promoting peace and reconciliation between all peoples and call on all religious leaders as well as all men and women of goodwill to join us in this pledge.

We affirm that we continue the bilateral contact for furthering and deepening our good relations for the profit of our respective peoples.

Editorial remarks

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