



## **Lebanon, the Message of Peace and Fraternity, is in Great Danger**

*American and European Bishops united in support for the Church and people of Lebanon*

It has been a year since His Beatitude Cardinal Béchara Pierre Raï, the Maronite Patriarch of Antioch, called for an international conference to protect Lebanon. Lebanon has long been an example of coexistence between Christians and Muslims. It is “*a universal message of peace and fraternity arising from the Middle East*” (Pope Francis). For many of its people, this current time is marked by pain, poverty, and despair. However, there remains hope for change, to protect the unique character of their country.

We have heard the warning of Pope Francis that “*Lebanon is in great danger*” and his appeal for us to turn our minds to the “*unprecedented crisis*” it faces. We support the Holy See’s continued efforts to seek peace in Lebanon. We pray that Archbishop Paul Gallagher’s calls for dialogue during his visit in February will bear lasting fruit.

The global community must stand alongside all those working to keep alive the principles that shaped Lebanon’s constitution and helped to end conflict through achievements such as the 1989 Taif Agreement and 2008 Doha Agreement. We therefore urge our own governments to:

- support Cardinal Raï’s appeal for action through the United Nations to find a solution to the crisis, upholding Lebanon’s independence, sovereignty, and neutrality
- safeguard the right of Lebanese citizens to choose their own representatives in free and fair elections, including through the offer of independent electoral observers
- assist the establishment of good governance, honesty, transparency, and accountability in the service of Lebanon’s people.

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Our nations also have a responsibility to provide relief for those affected by the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe, including both Lebanese citizens and the many refugees who have fled from neighboring countries. We are grateful for the humanitarian work of Catholic agencies and encourage our own communities to sustain their efforts.

Above all, we invite the faithful to join us in prayer for Lebanon. In the words of the Holy Father: *“May the night of conflicts recede before a new dawn of hope. May hostilities cease, disagreements fade away, and Lebanon once more radiate the light of peace.”*

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