

Al-Azhar International Declaration in Support of Jerusalem

Recognizing Al-Azhar's role as a beacon of intellectual and spiritual guidance in the Arab and Muslim world, and its esteemed reputation among various Christian authorities as well as among the free and rational people of the world, Al-Azhar steadfastly upholds its religious and humanitarian duties. These responsibilities have been central to its illustrious legacy over eleven centuries marked by honor and resilience.

In partnership with the Muslim Council of Elders, and under the patronage of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt, in the presence of President Mahmoud Abbas of the State of Palestine, Al-Azhar Al-Sharif convened the 'Al-Azhar International Conference in Support of Jerusalem' at Al-Azhar International Conference Center in Cairo, Egypt. The Conference brought together thought leaders, religious and political figures, and advocates for peace from eighty-six countries to explore new methods and strategies to uphold the identity and dignity of Jerusalem and the Palestinian people, safeguard their land, preserve Jerusalem's Arab character and spiritual essence, and counter Zionist arrogance that defies international resolutions and provokes the sentiments of people worldwide, particularly four billion Muslims and Christians. The Conference was convened in response to the decisions of the U.S. administration, which has clearly demonstrated its bias toward the occupying Zionist entity.

Over two days, from the 29th of Rabi' al-Thani to the 1st of Jumada al-Awwal in the year 1439 AH, corresponding to January 17-18, 2018, participants engaged in a series of sessions, discussions, and

workshops, ultimately agreeing to issue the 'Al-Azhar International Declaration in Support of Jerusalem', which encompasses the following key provisions:

First: The Conference reaffirmed the Al-Azhar Document on Jerusalem issued on November 20, 2011, which underscored the Arab identity of Jerusalem and its significance as a sacred site for both Islam and Christianity throughout history.

Second: The Conference asserted that Jerusalem is the eternal capital of the independent State of Palestine, and that it is imperative to work diligently toward its official recognition and acceptance on the international stage, as well as securing its full membership in all international organizations and bodies. Jerusalem is not merely occupied land or an exclusively Palestinian national issue or an Arab cause; it is much more than that. It stands as a sacred sanctuary for both Muslims and Christians, embodying a fundamental religious conviction for both faiths. As Muslims and Christians unite in their efforts to liberate it from the Zionist oppression, they seek to reaffirm its sanctity and call upon the global community to join in the endeavor to free it from the Zionist occupation.

Third: The Arab identity of Jerusalem is an unassailable truth that has persisted throughout history for millennia, and no attempts by global Zionism will succeed in distorting this reality or erasing it from history and the minds and consciences of Arabs and Muslims. The roots of Jerusalem's Arab identity run deep, extending over five thousand years to its founding by the Arab Jebusites in the fourth millennium BCE—long before Judaism emerged with the laws of

Moses, which appeared twenty-seven centuries later. Furthermore, the Hebrew presence in Jerusalem was limited to just 415 years during the reigns of David and Solomon (peace be upon them) in the tenth century BCE, marking a transient and fleeting existence after Jerusalem had already established its Arab identity three millennia prior to that.

Fourth: The Conference unequivocally rejected the recent decisions made by the U.S. administration, which, for the Arab and Muslim world and free people worldwide, amount to nothing more than empty words on paper. These decisions were categorically rejected, as they lack the historical, legal, and moral legitimacy that obliges the occupying entity to end its occupation in accordance with United Nations resolutions on the matter. The Conference, supported by all Arabs, Muslims, and free individuals worldwide, warned that, if those who issued this decision do not promptly retract it, it will fuel violent extremism that will spread across the globe.

Fifth: All available Arab and international resources—whether governmental or grassroots, Islamic, Christian, or Jewish—must be mobilized to put an end to the unjust and oppressive Zionist occupation of Arab Palestinian land.

Sixth: The Conference called upon the governments of the Muslim world, the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the United Nations, and civil society organizations to take swift and decisive action to halt the implementation of the U.S. administration's decision and to foster global public opinion against these unjust policies that violate human rights and freedoms.

Seventh: The Conference stressed that it stands in solidarity with the brave Palestinian people and supports their uprising against these arrogant decisions regarding the Palestinian cause, Jerusalem, and Al-Aqsa Mosque. It also stressed that it honors the spirit of unity between Muslims and Christians in Jerusalem, who stand together in the face of these unjust decisions, policies, and practices. We affirm in this Conference that we stand by their side and will not abandon them until Jerusalem is liberated.

Eighth: The Conference applauded the vigorous support of the Arab and Muslim communities and freedom-loving people around the globe. It urged continued pressure on the U.S. administration to reverse its decision that violates international norms. Additionally, the Conference commended the honorable stance of the European Union and many other nations that have rejected the unjust American decision regarding Jerusalem and have shown solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Ninth: The Conference expressed its support for Al-Azhar's initiative to create a curriculum centered on the sacred city of Jerusalem, to be taught at all the Al-Azhar institutes and Al-Azhar University. This effort is intended to keep the cause of Jerusalem vibrant in the minds of young people and deeply embedded in their consciences. Furthermore, it called on educational authorities in Arab and Muslim nations, and around the world, along with all effective authorities and organizations, to embrace this initiative.

Tenth: The Conference called upon rational Jews to reflect on history, which shows that they were persecuted everywhere except in Muslim lands, and to denounce Zionist actions that violate the

teachings of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). These teachings never condoned killing, displacing indigenous populations, usurping the rights of others, violating sacred sites, or plundering lands and holy places.

Eleventh: The Conference endorsed Al-Azhar's proposal to declare 2018 as the Year of Jerusalem and invited people from all backgrounds, organizations, and institutions worldwide to embrace this initiative, with the aim of advancing the cause of Jerusalem in all its dimensions.

Twelfth: The Conference called on all global bodies and organizations to maintain the legal status of Jerusalem, affirm its identity, and implement all necessary measures to protect the Palestinian people, especially those steadfast residents of the city. It advocated for enhancing their resilience, developing their resources, and eliminating barriers that impede their fundamental human rights and religious practices, ensuring their enduring presence and deep-rootedness in Arab Jerusalem. Additionally, the Conference urged political leaders in the Arab and Muslim world to wholeheartedly support these measures, refraining from any actions that might compromise the Palestinian cause or facilitate normalization with the occupying power.

Thirteenth: The Conference called for the formation of a joint committee, consisting of leading figures and bodies participating in this gathering, to monitor the real-world implementation of these recommendations and to continue advocating for the Palestinian cause, particularly the issue of Jerusalem. This committee will

present these issues at all relevant regional and international events.