



13.05.26

To His Holiness Pope Leo XIV and the Honorable Authorities of the Holy See of the Vatican

Peace be with you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

Following our previous letter to you, we reach out to you with heavy hearts. News of the Holy See awarding the “Grand Cross of the Order of Pius IX” to the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran, just weeks after the massacre of reportedly 42,000 innocent protestors by the Islamic regime in January, has caused deep pain and anguish for many Iranians thirsty for justice and freedom in Iran and beyond.

There are ongoing executions of protestors in Iran, and persecution of Christians from Muslim backgrounds and other religious minorities. There are also ongoing investigations about Islamic Regime’s links to antisemitic attacks and other terror activities in the UK.

We understand that you are pursuing diplomatic relations with leaders of the Islamic Republic, and that you do not necessarily endorse them politically or morally. Nevertheless, for a nation which has endured years of discrimination, imprisonment, deprivation, forced migration, and repression, bestowing the Grand Cross to the Islamic Republic is not mere formality for us. These symbols speak, shape perceptions, and at times reopen deep wounds. Furthermore, such images and symbols may unintentionally become tools of propaganda that overshadow the suffering of victims. This is what has deeply hurt the hearts of many Iranians. For us, the Cross reminds us of Christ, who stood beside the condemned, the humiliated, and the voiceless. Therefore, every honour bearing the name of the Cross should be accompanied by profound sensitivity toward the tears of the oppressed and not the glory of the oppressor.

We appreciate that you recently condemned regimes taking away the lives of innocent people. We desire to stand with you in truth and justice, as you stand beside suffering Iranians and against religious hypocrisy. We ask the Holy See to continue to show a public, pastoral concern for the pain, suffering, and sensitivities of the people of Iran, especially persecuted Christians, prisoners of faith, families seeking justice, and victims of repression and terror who have been harmed by the Islamic Republic of Iran and their proxies.

We understand the importance of the role of the Vatican in promoting dialogue, diplomacy, and efforts toward peace and that it has standard practices. Yet, with respect, we ask: should the diplomacy of the Church not always be accompanied by deep sensitivity toward the wounds of victims? Should official signs of respect not be balanced with a clear voice in defense of freedom, justice, and human dignity? For many the moral credibility of the Church is measured in whether it hears the cries of the suffering and shows courage to stand beside them.

In light of this, we ask the Vatican to:

- 1- Make clear that such ceremonial honours in no way mean disregarding violations of freedom of religion and belief, the suppression of human dignity, or the suffering of the Iranian people.
- 2- Hold the Islamic Republic of Iran accountable for their violent repression of protestors and ongoing executions of civilians, persecution of Christians and other religious minorities.
- 3- Support the plight of millions of Iranians who are seeking justice and freedom in Iran.

With concerned yet hopeful hearts, we pray that the Holy See, in all its decisions, both in diplomacy and in public witness, may continue to be a faithful witness to the love of Christ.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

United Christian Activists – a non-for profit organisation comprised of Iranian Christian leaders, pastors and members in the diaspora

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