

(**Editor's Note:** These are English translations of a declaration and notes released by the Holy See Press Office July 28.)

DECLARATION OF THE PRESS OFFICE OF THE HOLY SEE

Regarding the declarations that Mr. Barkan, an official of the Foreign Ministry of Israel, released to the *Jerusalem Post* on July 26.

1. The impossibility of sustaining the presumptuous accusation directed at Pope Benedict XVI for not having mentioned the terroristic attack in Netanya of July 12 after the prayer of the Angelus on July 24, cannot help but be clear even to the person who raised it. Perhaps for this reason, some have sought to sustain the charge by redirecting attention to alleged silences of John Paul II regarding attacks against Israel in past years, also inventing, in this regard, the claim that the government of Israel has repeatedly intervened with the Holy See, and asking that with the new pontificate, the Holy See change its attitude.
2. In response, it is noted that:
 - a. The interventions of John Paul II against every form of terrorism and against single acts of terrorism against Israel are numerous and public, as appears in the attached note.
 - b. It was not always possible with every attack against Israel to make an immediate public condemnation, and this for diverse reasons, among others the fact that the attacks against Israel of the time were followed by immediate reactions from the Israelis that were not always compatible with international norms. It would thus have been impossible to condemn the former and remain silent about the latter.
 - c. Just as the Government of Israel understandably does not allow others to dictate what it should say, in the same way the Holy See cannot allow itself to take instructions and directives from another authority regarding the orientation and contents of its own declarations.

July 28, 2005

Note of the Press Office of the Holy See

1. Recent declarations on the part of the Israelis have accused the Holy See, and Pope John Paul II in particular, of not having manifested its thinking in regard to terrorism, which many times has struck the inhabitants of the State of Israel.

Documents in the public domain make clear that such declarations are destitute of any foundation. In reality, the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II expressed many times, on diverse occasions, his thinking on the subject, both in reference to the State of Israel and its rights, and in reference to obligations with regard to the Palestinian People, in the clear awareness that violence and terrorism do not lead to peace.

2. Without any pretext of completeness, we desire to recall in particular some of the interventions of Pope John Paul II in condemnation of violence against civilians and in favor of the right of the State of Israel to live in security and peace.

He expressed himself in this sense, for example, in the speech to the Diplomatic Corps of January 12, 1979, and in that of January 16, 1982.

In the Angelus of April 4, 1982, he expressed his personal sorrow for the “new painful episodes that have taken place in Cisjordania, causing death and injury, while the anxiety and insecurity of the population has grown.”

In the General Audience of September 15, 1982, he asked that “forms of armed struggle, some of which in the past have been particularly ruthless and inhumane, be abandoned by both parties.”

On January 15, 1983, he admonished the parties that they have to be able to stop living in fear, as well as to stop having recourse to violence, to terrorism, and to reprisals.

In the Apostolic Letter *Redemptionis anno* of April 20, 1984, he wrote, on behalf of the Jewish people who live in Israel, that “we must invoke the desired security and the just tranquility that is the prerogative of every nation, and the condition of life and progress for every society.”

Those words were repeated during the meeting of John Paul II with the Jewish community of Miami on September 11, 1987, and with the Jewish community of Vienna on June 24, 1988, where he added that “to remember the Shoah also means to oppose every incitement to violence, to protect and to promote every tender bud of liberty and peace, with patience and constancy.”

Does not the affirmation of the “inalienable right to live in peace” for those who inhabit the Holy Land, as the pope affirmed on February 3, 1989, to the bishops of CELRA (Episcopal Conference of the Latin Bishops in the Arab Regions), also mean a condemnation of those who carry out acts of violence?

On October 10, 1990, during the General Audience, the pope denounced the violence in Jerusalem, before which “it is not possible to remain indifferent, and not to condemn it.”

Using strong language, on January 12, 1991, John Paul II said that “it must be recognized that certain Palestinian groups have chosen, in order to make themselves heard, methods that are unacceptable and must be condemned.”

Speaking during the Angelus of January 27, 1991, about the Middle East and the recourse to weapon of terrorism, he prayed “that God will deliver all from the temptation of the use of similar methods, contrary to the most elementary moral principles and condemned by international law!”

Meeting the Jewish community of Brazil on October 14, 1991, John Paul II voiced the hope that the Jews, in their land, “may live in peace and in security.”

Some have also forgotten the words pronounced in the Angelus of January 1, 1993, when the pontiff affirmed: “How can we not renew our firm condemnation of the violence in the Middle East, from wherever it comes?”

He reaffirmed that position on January 15, 1994, when he voiced the hope that dialogue would prevail over extremism, and the next year, on January 9, 1995, when he observed that in the Holy Land, “peace cannot be written with letters of blood, but with intelligence and with heart.” A few days later, on January 22 of the same year, John Paul II expressed sorrow and firm condemnation for the grave act of terrorism carried out in Netanya, and confidence that everyone would see the evil and uselessness of violence.

Disturbed by the attack of July 30, 1997, in the market of Jerusalem, the pope asked the Press Office to issue a tough note, in which it was affirmed that, “The Holy See deplores this blind violence that sows the seeds of indiscriminate death. Peace is not constructed with this type of action. The Holy Father has recalled many times that violence generates only violence.”

On January 13, 2001, referring to the events in Bethlehem, he recalled that “no one should accept ... the eventuality of a kind of guerrilla warfare.” The next year, on January 10, before the Diplomatic Corps, he spoke of the innocent victims that on both sides fall every day under blows and gunshots, and the necessity of prevailing together in the battle for peace. He was referring to the conflict underway in Palestine.

In his message *Urbi et Orbi* of March 31, 2002, the words of the pontiff were raised in condemnation of “the tragic sequence of atrocities and assassinations that make bloody the Holy Land,” and on the occasion of the suicide bombing of February 22, 2004, in Jerusalem, he expressed his firm rejection of this brutal act, denouncing the absurd dynamic of violence.

Just a month before his death, John Paul II, in the Angelus of February 13, confided: “I continue to pray for peace in the Middle East.”

3. Moreover, Pope John Paul II, before millions of people, in his *Urbi et Orbi* messages, in diverse addresses to the Roman Curia, in his catechesis, and in meetings with Jewish delegations, has deplored terrorism against the inhabitants of the Holy Land in the most firm way.

Also, in recalling the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, the Supreme Pontiff also repeatedly stigmatized in unequivocal terms the inadmissibility of violent methods that, through terrorist acts perpetrated against the Israeli civilian population, have impeded the peace initiatives put in motion ... by wise political forces among both Israelis and Palestinians.

4. It's a painful surprise that, in the course of 26 years, the voice of Pope John Paul II, raised many times with force and passion regarding the dramatic situation of the Holy Land, and in condemnation of every terrorist act and inviting sentiments of unity and peace, could pass unnoticed.

Affirmations contrary to historic truth can please only those who intend to foment animosity and conflicts, and certainly do not serve to help the situation.