

Israeli Prime Minister Delivers Worldwide Christmas Greeting to Christians

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu paid a visit to the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem on Wednesday (Dec. 21) to deliver his annual Christmas greeting to the Christian world.

“In his traditional holiday greeting, Netanyahu says: “To all of our Christian friends around the world, merry Christmas and a happy New Year! I send you these greetings from Jerusalem. I’m standing in the courtyard of this magnificent International Christian Embassy. I’m so proud of our relations with our Christian brothers and sisters.

“I wonder for many of you if you remember the experience you had when you first visited Israel, when you saw the Church of the Holy Sepulchre or the Via Dolorosa or the Sea of Galilee or Nazareth. I’m sure it moved you deeply. And it moves us deeply to have this bond with you because we all know that this land of Israel is the land of our common heritage. It changed the story of humanity; it changed civilization. What a magnificent heritage it is.

“Yet we also know that it is under attack these days, that the forces of intolerance, of barbarism that attack all religions attack Christians with particular vehemence. We stand with you and I’m proud of the fact that in Israel, this is the one place in the Middle East that the Christian community not only survives but thrives, and it’s no accident. It’s because of our commitment to religious freedom; it’s because of our embrace of our heritage; it’s because of our embrace of our common future. So please come to Israel.

“Come and visit me, I’m waiting for you. It will be a great

experience for you. Merry Christmas. Happy New Year.”

With Christmas falling this year on the same day as the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, ICEJ Executive Director Dr. Jürgen Bühler responded by wishing Prime Minister Netanyahu a “happy Hanukkah” and giving him a special Hanukkah dreidel as a gift.

“It was a great honor to host the Prime Minister at our Embassy headquarters and to receive his good holiday wishes for Christmas,” Bühler says. “We know his warm, sincere remarks will be greatly appreciated by Christians in lands far and wide. It also was a thrill to respond with our own ‘happy Hanukkah’ wishes for him, his family and all the Jewish people. This indeed is a season when both communities can celebrate the triumph of light over darkness. And this display of solidarity shows once more that Israel is a country where religious freedoms are not only safeguarded but also proactively encouraged.” {eoa}

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