



## **Religious leaders in Israel prayed together for salvation from the pandemic**

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In a unique move, religious leaders in Israel have taken a stand against the corona virus at the end of April. "Hundreds of thousands have died, millions have fallen ill. Save, we implore You, O Lord", Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Druze representatives prayed together in Jerusalem. The prayer, specially created for this occasion, was broadcast on the Internet due to the strict restrictions in the fight against Covid-19.

The religious representatives asked for God to heal the sick and avert the plague from his world. In addition, Psalm 121 was recited, with which Jerusalem pilgrims placed themselves under the protection of God and asked for His blessing. In Israel, the Psalm is also prayed on the day of commemoration for fallen Israeli soldiers and victims of terror (Jom HaZikaron), which was celebrated a few days later.

In an interview with the Catholic News Agency (KNA), Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, head of the Patriarchate, stressed that the corona virus knows no boundaries between religions, races or political parties. "We are united in the disease, and that has destroyed a lot of boundaries and prejudices between us." He very much hopes that this unity can continue after the Corona crisis is over.

The British Rabbi David Rosen, who is highly respected in the Christian-Jewish and inter-religious dialogue and who acted as moderator of the meeting, classified the common prayer as historical. "The religious leaders of this country have come together for the first time ever to say a prayer together for divine grace and compassion at the moment when we are challenged by a pandemic," said Rosen. The meeting of the various religious leaders was "wonderful and sad" at the same time. Even those who are "usually not so open to inter-religious dialogue" came together for common prayer, even if it is "a tragedy, pain and suffering that have brought us together despite theological tensions."

The interreligious prayer, which was broadcast live on the Internet, was an initiative of various institutions and organizations, including the Israeli Chief Rabbinate and the World Council of Religious Leaders. In addition to the Sephardic and Ashkenazi Chief Rabbis Jitzchak Josef and David Lau, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theophilos III and the head of the Catholic Patriarchate Archbishop Pizzaballa as well as senior Muslim and Druze representatives took part.