



PONTIFF URGES FAIRNESS IN RESOLVING MIDEAST CONFLICT

Greets Palestinian Leader Mahmud Abbas

VATICAN CITY, OCT. 8, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Benedict XVI met today with President Mahmud Abbas of the Palestinian National Authority today in the Vatican, during which the Pope stressed the importance of cooperation and mutual respect in resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

"In the course of the cordial conversations, a dialogue was opened on the situation in the Middle East and, in particular, on the need to find a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, with which the rights of all are recognized and respected," the Vatican press office reported after the 15-minute meeting.

The Vatican added that the two underlined "the importance of cooperation and mutual respect between the parties and the support of the international community."

Mention was made of Benedict XVI's trip to the Holy Land last May, which included a visit to the Palestinian Territories. The Pope announced then that the Holy See would establish a bilateral commission with the National Palestinian Authority.

During his visit to the Palestinian Territories, specifically in Bethlehem, Benedict XVI confirmed the Holy See's support of the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state and the aspirations of peace and stability of Israelis and Palestinians.

"The Holy See supports the rights of your population to a sovereign Palestinian homeland in the land of your forbears, safe and in peace with its neighbors, within borders recognized internationally," he said.

In this Thursday's audience, reference was made to the situation of Catholics in the Palestinian territories, and "their contribution to social life and peaceful coexistence among

peoples," notes the Holy See's communiqué.

The difficult situation of Christians in this region will be highlighted in the synod for the Middle East, which the Church is planning for October 2010.

The theme for the special assembly of bishops, which will be held in the Vatican, will be "The Catholic Church in the Middle East: Communion and Witness: 'The Multitude of Those Who Became Believers Were of One Heart and One Soul' (Acts 4:32)."

Abbas also met separately with the Pope's secretary of state, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone.