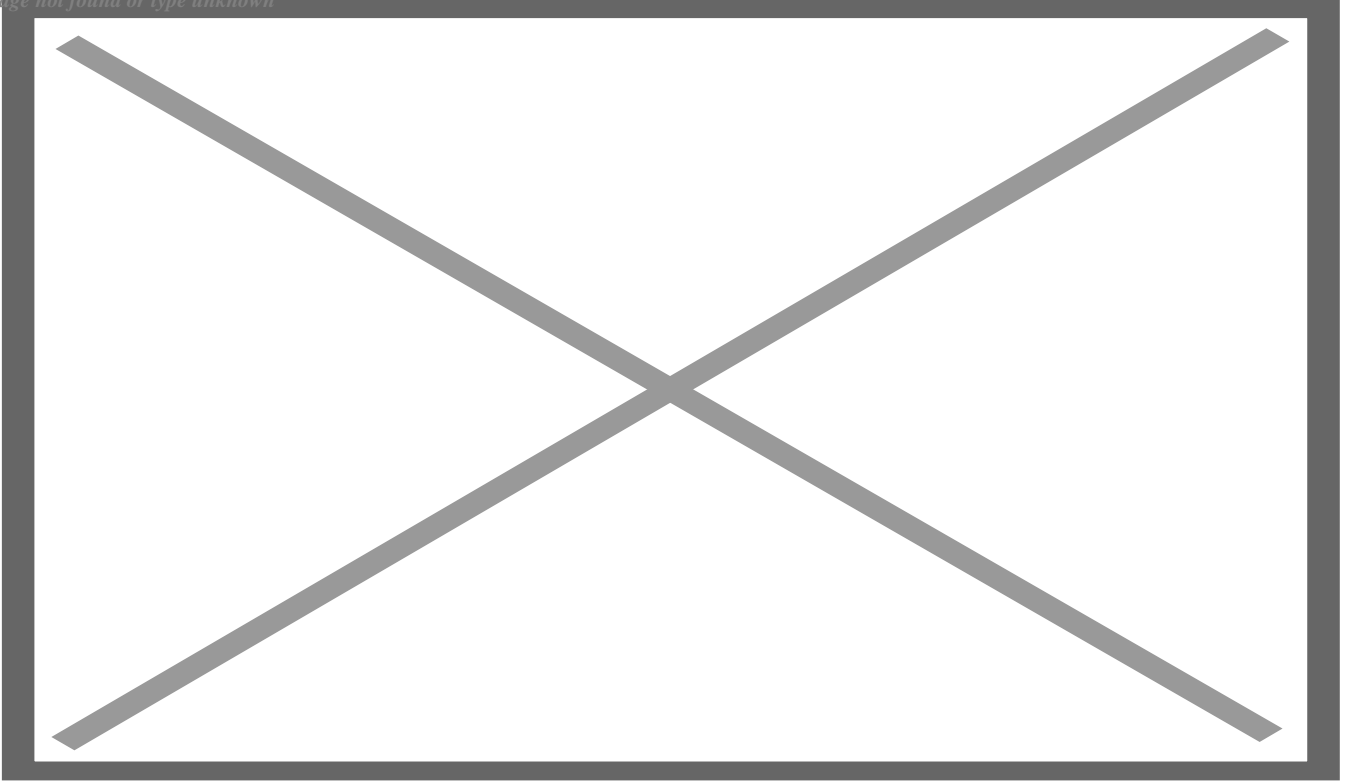


Silent Night?

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By Guillermo Alvarado

Nothing reflects better the tragedy that plagues the population in the Gaza Strip than the fact that millions of people around the world celebrated Christmas, unaware that in Bethlehem, where according to tradition Jesus Christ was born, the religious authorities canceled all activities.

There was no Christmas Eve in the cradle of Christianity as a sign of mourning for the more than 21,000 innocent children, women and men who were killed by Israel during the brutal bombings against that population and the recent ground attacks.

The "night of peace" spoken of in the traditional chants of the date was another day of terror for more than 1.5 million Palestinians who remain without medical care, whose homes are reduced to rubble and who survive under the threat of starvation.

The day before, December 25, Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Gaza not to hand out gifts to children, but to announce that Israeli attacks will continue and intensify in the coming days, that what he calls war, which is in reality genocide, will be long and far from over.

Enough reasons for Bethlehem, located in the Palestinian territory of the West Bank about nine kilometers from Jerusalem, the streets were empty this Christmas and nobody came to the call of the bells of the basilica built in the grotto where Jesus is said to have been born.

"We cannot celebrate when many of us feel saddened and frightened by what is happening in Gaza," said the clergy in that city, which also suffers the effects of a fierce blockade imposed by the Zionist occupiers.

They also asked the world to open its eyes and heart to understand the full magnitude of the drama and to support the Palestinian population, not only with prayers or the sending of aid, but with concrete actions to reach a cease-fire and restore the precarious peace in the battered strip.

Unfortunately, this world remains absent, with only timid expressions of repudiation of Israeli brutality. We miss the large demonstrations in the streets of the main cities of the West to force their governments to disobey the orders of the United States.

In the most recent resolution of the docile UN Security Council, the members of that body drafted a timorous resolution calling for humanitarian aid for the Palestinians, but without demanding an end to Tel Aviv's attacks, because that is what the boss in the White House ordered.

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