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## **Morocco earthquake: message from Christian Churches to the people, “with you, we are following with pain the toll rising by the hour”**

“Your land is also the land where we live, the events that affect you, be they joyful or painful, also affect us. We are shocked by this devastating earthquake that has hit so many people, families, and communities in Morocco, especially in the Al Haouz region. With you, we are following with pain the toll that is rising by the hour in terms of human lives lost, collapsed houses, destroyed infrastructure... A real devastation in the south of Morocco and in Morocco's Atlas region”. This message of closeness and solidarity from the Christian Churches to the people of Morocco was signed by the Archbishops of Rabat and Tangier, Card. Cristobal Cardinal Lopez Romero and Mgr. Emilio Rocha Grande, by the president of the Evangelical Church Karen Smith, and by the representatives of the Orthodox Church, Maxim Massalitin, and of the Anglican Church, Dennis Chiedu Obidigwu. These are crucial hours for the country. Although the chances to save lives are now almost nil, in many places throughout Morocco people continue to dig through the rubble in a desperate search for survivors. Meanwhile, the death toll from the devastating earthquake that hit Morocco has risen to more than 2,800 according to the Interior Ministry, with 2,562 people injured. “In the face of this tragedy – the message from the Christian Churches reads –, we would like to express our compassion and closeness to the entire country and to all Moroccan families in mourning or with injured members, who have lost their homes and their property”. “With you, we turn to the one God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. On Sunday, in all churches across the country, we have prayed for the victims and for all the families affected and in distress, that God may give them the strength and courage to stand and go on. We will continue to pray with this intention, so that hope will prevail over despair”. The leaders of the Churches wrote that the Christian communities in the country were spared by the earthquake and immediately got involved to promote “financial solidarity with all, so that we can help you rebuild and address the most urgent needs, particularly those of the elderly, the sick and children, and in the healthcare and education sectors”. “The call for solidarity is heard in our Christian communities, and we join the call for solidarity addressed to the whole nation by the King and the government. May God help us to draw positive consequences from this painful event, by transforming our hearts into hearts of mercy, solidarity and tenderness towards our brothers and sisters in distress”.

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