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Acrimony with Israel clouds close of Middle East Synod

John L. Allen Jr. | Oct. 25, 2010

Melkite Patriarch Gregoire III Laham of Damascus, Syria, holds a crucifix as he prays during the closing Mass of the Synod of Bishops for the Middle East in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Oct. 24. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

In some ways, the surprise of the Oct. 10-24 Synod of Bishops for the Middle East may not be that it ended amid acrimony involving Israel, the Vatican, and the mostly Arab bishops of the region. Instead, the surprise may be that it took so long to happen.

As the synod wrapped up on Sunday, Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon complained that it had turned into ?a forum for political attacks on Israel, in the best history of Arab propaganda.?

Ayalon specifically objected to a comment made at the synod?s closing press conference on Saturday by Greek Melkite Archbishop Cyrille Salim Bustros, who?s actually based in Newton, Massachusetts.

Bustros was commenting on a line in the synod's final message, which rejected use of the Bible to justify injustice.

?We Christians cannot speak of the ?promised land? as an exclusive right for a privileged Jewish people,? Bustros said. ?This promise was nullified by Christ. There is no longer a chosen people ? all men and women of all countries have become the chosen people.?

Some Jews took that line as an expression of theological "Supercessionism," meaning that the coming of Christ "cancelled" God's covenant with Israel -- a view that the Second Vatican Council and subsequent papal teaching has been understood to reject. Some Israelis likewise saw it as a rejection of Israel as a "Jewish state."

Read the full report here: **Acrimony with Israel clouds close of Middle East Synod**
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Read *NCR*'s full coverage of the Synod of Bishops for the Middle East: Index of stories from the Synod [2].

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