

مجلس الأساقفة في إقليم شمال إفريقيا

Conference of Bishops of the North Africa Region (CERNA)

Plenary Assembly of 22nd to 27th November 2025

Final Communiqué

From 22nd to 27th November 2025, Bishops and Vicars General met in Tunis for their plenary assembly, with the exception of Father Amado Baranquel, Vicar General of Benghazi, absent for pastoral reasons. We had a special thought for Bishop George Bugeja of the Apostolic Vicariate of Tripoli, a resigning bishop, and welcomed the appointment of Father Magdy Helmy, formerly Vicar General of Tripoli, as an apostolic administrator. On behalf of all, the President welcomed Bishop Diego Sarrió Cucarella, of Laghouat-Ghardaïa, installed on 16th May 2025, and Bishop Michel Guillaud, of Constantine and Hippo, ordained and installed in Annaba on 18th October 2025. Bishop Victor Ndione, of Nouakchott, represented the Church of Mauritania, usually invited to the assemblies of CERNA. The participants welcomed the nomination on 22nd November of the new apostolic nuncio in Algeria, His Excellency Archbishop Javier Herrera Corona. Bishops John MacWilliam emeritus bishop of Laghouat-Ghardaïa and Ilario Antoniazzi emeritus bishop of Tunis participated in some of the fraternal events on the occasion of this assembly.

It was our first plenary meeting since the election of Pope Leo XIV. We thus assembled in communion with him on the occasion of his first Apostolic journey to Turkey and Lebanon. CERNA supports his efforts for peace, ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, 1700 years after the Council of Nicaea and 60 years after the promulgation of the Nostra Aetate Conciliary Declaration. The opening Mass took place at the parish- Cathedral of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Olive, followed by a meeting with the parishioners. With the leaders of sister churches, we had the joy of living an ecumenical jubilee pilgrimage to Oudhna, where several Christians were martyred in the first centuries AD.

During these days, CERNA had the joy of living several fraternal encounters with parishes and religious communities.

An exchange on what we live in our churches and countries allowed us to share the joys and sorrows of our day-to-day lives.

Interculturality, human mobility, the decrease in the number of permanent pastoral agents, the frequent renewal of our faithful, the face of our churches for the coming years, the implementation of the synodal orientations on synodality, these are the subjects which we treated that call us to an even closer collaboration. As part of our Mediterranean commitment, we are pleased with the enthusiastic and convergent testimonies of the actors of different programs: MED 25, the Youth Council of the Mediterranean, PeaceMed and the 'School of Diversity'.

The visit of the delegation from the Dicastery for promoting integral human development was rich and dealt with key themes for our Churches such as: human mobility, ecology and social and economic solidarity. The meeting with vulnerable people has reinforced us in our commitment to reach the little ones and fragile people. Welcoming, Listening, Accompaniment, Respect, Restoration of Dignity and Integration, these are the values that must continue to guide our communities. We also encourage the support of initiatives for the ecology and social and economic solidarity in collaboration with local populations and actors. We also met two representatives of the Pontifical Foundation "Kirche in Not". Their availability to collaborate closely with our churches is a valuable support for our pastoral work.

The inculturation of the liturgy and the updating of our own liturgical books caught our attention. We want to grow in communion, taking into account our cultural diversity and the countries in which we live. We welcomed the progress of the work of our theological commission on the biblical foundations of our Mission.

We reviewed the recommendations of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors published in its latest annual report. One of our goals is to develop a code of conduct common to all our Churches. We continue to work closely with this commission which is willing to accompany initiatives in each of our Mission countries.

We noted that the Plenary Assembly of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) was held in Kigali in the summer of 2025. As a reminder, on 29th September CERN elected Bishop Diego Sarrió Cucarella as our new representative to the Standing Committee of SECAM.

CERNA warmly thanks all those who contributed to the successfulness of this excellent meeting.

The next plenary assembly of CERN will take place in Nouakchott in Mauritania, from 18th to 25th November 2026.

+ Bishop Nicolas Lhernould, Archbishop of Tunis and President of CERN with his brother bishops and vicar generals of Rabat, Tangiers, Benghazi, Algiers, Oran, Laghouat-Ghardaïa, Constantine and Hippo, the apostolic administrator of Tripoli and the Apostolic Prefect of Laayoune.

Tunis, 27th November 2025

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