

HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III DELIVERS A MESSAGE OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE IN JERUSALEM

On Wednesday, 3rd /16th of September 2009, a ceremony was held by the Israeli Police at the Police Headquarters, next to the Russian Mission (Mascobiyeh), on occasion of the Jewish New Year. At this gathering, invited where also representatives of the Christian communities in the Holy Land and notables.

At the start of the ceremony, the Rabbi of Jerusalem spoke of the past year as being one of blessings but also of difficulties. The previous year with its difficulties has ended and a new one is coming. *"This period"* the Rabbi said *"is a time for forgiveness between us and God. We wish for good times to come, times of peace for Israel"*.

Following on, the Mayor of Jerusalem, Mr. Nir Barkat, spoke and said that it is a privilege for us to serve and live in Jerusalem, a city in the heart of Israel, upon which billions of people around the world focus. It is our duty to take advantage of this. The Mayor then thanked the Police for their cooperation, for their numerous activities and wished that the New Year to be one of joy, peace, security and a year of decreased disputes and contentions.

In conclusion the Mayor expressed his condolences to those families whose members, policemen, had fallen victims in the line of duty.

After this, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos

III addressed the attendees on behalf of the Christian leaders of the Holy Land, as follows:

Address to the Jerusalem Police at Rosh Hashanah

His Beatitude Theophilus III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

16 September 2009.

“Mayor of Jerusalem Mr. Barkat

The head of the Jerusalem Police Mr. Franco.

Respected Members of the Jerusalem Police,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we celebrate the high holy day of Rosh Hashanah, we greet you warmly on our behalf on the behalf of our fellow Christian leaders here. We value our important relationship and the cooperation and good understanding that have long existed between us.

We recognize that yours is a complicated and frequently difficult job. The eyes of the world are so often focused on the Holy Places in this Holy City – a city that is dear and holy to Jew, Christian and Muslim alike. Even those who profess no religious belief understand the significance of Jerusalem for the entire human family. This means that your work is often in the spotlight, and that you are subject to unusually high levels that mistakes and shortcomings are quickly noticed, while faithful duty often goes unrecognized.

For our part, we salute you today for the responsible work that you do to keep public order, especially during the periods of the various holy days, religious celebrations, and civic holidays in the Old City. Whether it is Ramadan, or Passover, or Easter, the well-being of all depends on your

presence and judgment. Pilgrims must have access to the Holy Places during religious festivals, and the City must be safe and accessible for all.

We note with particular appreciation your duty during the recent Feast of the Dormition that coincided with the beginning of Ramadan. Every year, the crowded procession moves from the courtyard of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to Gethsemane. There are always many pilgrims, and it is a challenge to manage such large numbers of people. This year everything went smoothly and uneventfully, and the pilgrims were deeply appreciative of the police. May the good experience and the handling of the safety of everyone at the Feast of the Dormition be an inspiration to us to ensure that proper accommodation is made also for the needs of pilgrims for the Ceremony of the Holy Fire.

As we reflect on this and many other similar occasions when your work has ensured the safety and security of so many, we encourage you to continue to maintain the highest standards of professional conduct and decorum in the face of your many and heavy duties. At this new year, may you deepen your commitment to the dignity of your profession as those to whom a great trust has been given.

The prophet Isaiah reminds us eloquently of “the heart of Jerusalem.” ‘Speak to the heart of Jerusalem’, says Isaiah. (Isaiah 40:1).

To us in our religious and spiritual mission, and to you in your civic responsibility, has the care of ‘heart of Jerusalem’ been entrusted. This is both a sacred and a public duty. We thank you for the role that you play in caring for the heart of Jerusalem, a heart that beats with life for all and especially for faithful of the three monotheistic Faiths, and we wish you and your families a happy and blessed New Year. Thank you”.

Chief Secretary's Office