

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM BLESSES THE DELIBERATIONS OF THE 8TH ORTHODOX CONVENTION OF LOCAL COUNCILS IN NAZARETH

On Saturday, the 10th/23rd of May 2015, the 8th Orthodox Convention of the Local Councils of Greek Orthodox Arabic-Speaking Communities of the Patriarchate in Israel took place at the events hall of the Orthodox Arabic-speaking Community, in Nazareth.

Each Arabic-speaking Community within the area of Israel since 1948 is ruled by a Council elected by the Community and ratified by the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Each Council has a Chairman and members and deals with issues of concern to its pertinent Community, including religious, educational and property issues, in collaboration with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The Councils represent Nazareth, Remle, Lydda, Joppa, Haifa, Accra, and twelve villages that fall under their wider area.

The decisions of each Council are executed by an Executive Committee consisting of a member from each Community.

The current Chairman of the Executive Committee is Mr Raik Zarzoura, an Orthodox Arabic-speaker from Nazareth.

The 8th Convention had as participants Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem, the representative of the Community of the Druze, Mr Mowafet Tarif, Mr Ayman Odeh, member of the Jewish Parliament; the Chairwoman of the Nazareth Council, Ms Afaf Touma, the former Latin Patriarch, judge Mohammed Abu Abendi

and other distinguished personalities.

The addresses of the Chairman of the Council and the President of the Executive Committee first emphasized the need to liberate the Syrian Bishops. The importance of the collaboration between the Communities and the Patriarchate towards protecting their identity as Christians, their residence in the state of Israel, and their property under the light of volatile political developments in the Middle East, were also pointed out, along with the need to set up physical education facilities for the youth. Also discussed during the meeting was the need to fight against social and ethnic discriminations and unite Christians, the Druze and Muslims in promoting the rights of their Communities within the state of Israel.

Mutual respect between the Communities, tolerance, collaboration and repentance are necessary, it was said, in order to achieve this. Palestinian songs were performed during the meeting under the direction of Mr Samir Mahoul from Kafr Yasif.

Patriarch Theophilos blessed the workings of the Convention. His speech was read in Arabic by f. Issa Mousleh, the Patriarchate's Arabic-speaking media liaison.

On the conclusion of the first part of deliberations, the members of the Executive Committee asked His Beatitude several questions, which He answered patiently and in a paternal and pastoral manner.

At noon, participants were hosted to lunch, after which the election of the new Chairman of the Executive Committee took place.

From the Secretariat-General