

THE POSITION OF THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM ON THE INTERRUPTION OF COMMUNION BY THE PATRIARCHATE OF ANTIOCH

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem expresses its sorrow on the recent decision of the Patriarchate of Antioch to break off communion with it, and would like to sincerely and truthfully inform the sister Orthodox Churches and its flock about the following:

Firstly, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, responding to an invitation by the Christians of Qatar, a geographical territory within its ecclesiastical jurisdiction, appointed Theophilos, now Patriarch of Jerusalem, as officiating priest there in 1997, when there was neither a church in the region nor was the Christian worship performed. Ever since and to this day, Orthodox Christians in Qatar attend the liturgy, initially in Houses of Prayer, and since 2009 in the Church of St George, the Glorious Great Martyr, and St Isaac the Syrian, founded by the Patriarchate on a plot of land offered by His Highness Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani.

Secondly, the late Patriarch Diodoros of Jerusalem paid a pastoral visit to Qatar in 1999, His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, in 2010. In the course of this pastoral activity of eighteen years but also prior to that, the Patriarchate of Antioch had never had a presence there, neither had it ever protested for any reason. Its protests were first put forward when the Patriarchate consecrated Archimandrite Makarios, serving there since 2004, as Archbishop of Qatar. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, by the

help of God, developed its project in Qatar into an Inter-Orthodox Multilingual Liturgical Center for a flock of approximately 12.000 souls, far from any racial discrimination. By contrast, the Antioch Patriarchate places the question on an ethnic-racial basis, as may be seen in its letter addressed to the Qatar Foreign Ministry, suggesting that "Patriarch John X of Antioch and All East is the only recognized Patriarch from the Orthodox Community (Taife) across the entire Middle East and represents the Orthodox Community in all Arab countries, including for example Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Jerusalem, Egypt, Bahrain, the Emirates, Iran".

Thirdly, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem irrevocably refutes the unsubstantiated claim of the Patriarchate of Antioch for an alleged agreement to alter the title of Archbishop Makarios of Qatar reached during a meeting at the Directorate for Churches of the Hellenic Foreign Ministry in July 2013, invoking the testimony of the delegates of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and of the Directorate for Churches.

Fourthly, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem remains firmly committed to conciliation and dialogue, a stance it had held since the very beginning, and proposes the setting up of a Committee of Canon Law Experts to rule on the issue, without interrupting the memorial of the sister Orthodox Church of Antioch, for the sake of the unity of the Orthodox Church.

From the Secretariat-General