

H. B. THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM ADDRESSES THE PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL ON THE OCCASION OF THE NEW YEAR 2016

On Monday, the 15th/28th of December 2015, the Leaders of the Christian Churches in Jerusalem made a long-established visit to the President of the State of Israel on the occasion of the new year 2016.

In the context of the meeting, the President of Israel, Mr Reuven Rivlin, addressed the Heads of Churches and their Entourage, underlining the following:

The meeting takes place 50 years after the “nostra aetate” declaration that had condemned antisemitism, and after Mr Rivlin’s recent meeting with Pope Francis. The Bible’s principle and value is to love your neighbour like yourself and this value is preserved in the state of Israel. The state of Israel preserves the freedom of worship for adherents of all religions within its territory, cultivating dialogue. The Presidential Palace, said Mr Rivlin, is open to all of you, and went on to extend wishes for a Merry Christmas and a blessed and peaceful New Year.

Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem replied in English to the President’s remarks on behalf of all religious Leaders, see link: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2015/12/28/19093>

In His address, Patriarch Theophilos expressed the gratitude of the Heads of Churches in the Holy Land to the President of the State of Israel for his stand on the recent incidents of violence against Holy Shrines and Churches. “It is absolutely unacceptable”, said His Beatitude, “to use religion allegedly

in the name of God, in the image and likeness of Whom all human beings are created. The fact that we have all been created from the same earth should remind us of our human nature. Our duty is to safeguard the spiritual richness and beauty of Jerusalem, the spiritual capital of the nations. This beauty is upheld by the status quo". The Patriarch went on to reiterate commitment to education through schools. "We assure you, Mr President, of our commitment to maintaining accessibility to the Holy Places for the thousands of pilgrims who are coming to the Holy Land as messengers of peace".

The Patriarch's words marked the end of the visit of the Heads of Christian Churches to the Presidential Palace of Israel on the occasion of the New Year.

From the Secretariat-General

