

# **THE HOLY MONASTERY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST BY THE RIVER JORDAN FALLS AGAIN VICTIM TO VANDALISM**

On Sunday, the 29<sup>th</sup> of February/13<sup>th</sup> of March 2016, Cheesefare Sunday, the Monastery of St John the Forerunner and Baptist, on the west bank of the river Jordan, fell victim to a violent and harsh vandalism attack.

Over the past years, having obtained a special permit from the Israeli army, this ancient Monastery is being maintained by the subvention of the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which has undertaken to restore the damages it had suffered during the six-day war of 1967.

Today, Lent Monday the 1<sup>st</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> of March 2016, the supervisors of the conservation works underway have discovered that the central gate to the Monastery had been secured from the inside by unknowns using a bolt, which allowed them to commit acts of vandalism, as shown on the uploaded images, namely: writing slogans on the walls of the first-floor rooms above the church, and breaking into a room and destroying the P.C. that contained all archives of works carried out. Also, they have apparently caused damages to the interior walls of the rooms, removing tools, two generators, and other items which they must have loaded on a truck waiting by the Monastery's outside wall, as indicated by the traces of wheels on the desert road.

Once notified, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem informed the Israeli Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Israeli Army and Police of the Jericho region, who went on to visit the site and record the damages in the presence of Archimandrite Chrysostomos, Hegumen of the Monastery of Abba Gerasimus and

supervisor of the Monastery of John the Baptist. The architect of the Church of the Resurrection, Theodosios Mitropoulos, was also present.

In anticipation of the visit of His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, tomorrow, Tuesday, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem would like to state that it promotes dialogue, reconciliation and peaceful interreligious coexistence in the Holy Land, whilst irrevocably condemning this unacceptable act of vandalism. Lastly, the Patriarchate intends to take all necessary legal action towards finding the culprits and protecting its Monastery.

**From the Secretariat-General**

