

# HIS BEATITUDE THEOPHILOS' III ADDRESS AT THE HOLIDAY RECEPTION HOSTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

27 December 2016

Your Excellency, Mr. President, Reuven Rivlin,  
Minister of Internal Affairs Arye Machluf Deri  
Fellow Leaders of the Faith Communities,  
Your Excellencies,  
Your Eminences,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We greet you, Mr. President, in this season of light and hope  
for all our peoples with words from the Scriptures:

***This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to  
you, that God is Light and in Him there is no darkness at  
all,***

***– (John I:5)***

At this time of the year, the eyes of the world are turned  
toward Bethlehem and the Holy Land, where for millennia the  
divine-human encounter has been made manifest, and even today

we are living witnesses to sacred history.

We take this opportunity of this holiday gathering to express our gratitude to you for the firmness with which you defend the freedoms that lie at the heart of this democracy, especially the freedom of worship. And we are always encouraged by your commitment to the sacredness of life and your condemnation of all forms of terrorism, as you articulated most recently during your visit to Germany. These fundamental commitments are the basis of any society that understands that we share a common human destiny.

The State of Israel takes pride in the fact that this State was founded on democratic principles in the Middle East and that it guarantees full freedom of worship; and we are confident, Mr. President, that you will continue to resist any restrictions on religious practices.

For generations in this region we have lived by the rights, privileges, and traditions accorded by age-long custom and sanctioned by sacred history, and we who are the spiritual leaders of the faith communities of the Holy Land, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim, remain bound and committed to this foundation of our common life together. These rights, privileges, and traditions are part of the fabric of our region, and we trust that you will ensure that they are never abrogated or restricted.

We are keenly aware at this season of the unspeakable experiences of those who suffer around the world, and especially those who suffer in the countries around us. So many are suffering for the mere fact of their religious allegiance, and as those who serve the moral values of our respective religious traditions, we are deeply concerned. We appeal to all people of good will for an end to violence and for all peoples to have their own legitimate rights of self-

determination and freedom.

Needless to say, the long and unbroken presence of the Jerusalem Church in the Holy Land has safe-guarded the religious and cultural qualities that have shaped our landscape. For our Abrahamic faith has been a beacon of light and this light must never be extinguished.

As we celebrate this holy season, Mr. President, we assure you of our prayers for you and for your family and we wish you a peaceful New Year. May God bless all the peoples of our beloved Holy Land.

Hag Hannukah sammeach.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

**THEOPHILOS III**

Patriarch of Jerusalem