

ADDRESS OF H.H.B. THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM TO THE ARMENIAN DELEGATION ON THEIR VISIT TO THE PATRIARCHATE FOR THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY

9 January 2018

Your Beatitude Patriarch Nourhan,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

We welcome you to our Rum Orthodox Patriarchate and we thank you very much for your greetings on the occasion of our celebration of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this season we sing

O Christ, the true Light who enlightens and sanctifies

every person who comes into the world,

let the light of your countenance be marked upon us,

that in it we may say the light unapproachable.

(Prayer from the First Hour, Christmas Eve)

We give thanks for the true Light that has come into the world, and we take to heart the implications of the

Incarnation of our world. In this Holy City and Holy Land of the divine-human encounter, we know the power of the holy places to renew and refresh the soul and give hope to all who worship God in them.

We also give thanks at this time for the support that we have received from religious and governmental leaders around the world as we have shared with them our concerns about the new pressures and difficulties that the Christian communities of this City and region are now facing. We have been heartened by their statements in support of the Status Quo and their condemnation of those radical elements in our region that would like to turn Jerusalem and the Holy Land into an exclusive, rather than an inclusive society, in blatant disregard of our historic right and privileges and of our multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious landscape.

We are grateful that the Heads of the Churches of the Holy Land have expressed our solidarity in this matter and that we stand united. The well-known challenges, that is the Bill of Church Lands that is circulating in the Knesset and the recent judgment in the Jaffa Gate case, have alerted us all to the threat to the Status Quo that is before us. The Christian Community is of the essence of the Holy Land and the Middle East, and this presence must be upheld and supported by all.

As we keep this glorious feast, may the true Light of the Sun of Justice, that is the newborn Christ, that enlightens everyone who comes into the world, enlighten our hearts and minds and may he give us strength and resolve in our spiritual mission to guard and serve the Holy Places, and to ensure the well-being of the Christian presence here.

Thank you.