

STATEMENTS BY THE HEADS OF CHURCHES AND THE ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER ON THE RE-OPENING OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

27 February 2018

We, the heads of Churches in charge of the Holy Sepulcher and the Status Quo governing the various Christian Holy Sites in Jerusalem – the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, the Custody of the Holy Land and the Armenian Patriarchate – give thanks to God for the statement released earlier today by Prime Minister Netanyahu and offer our gratitude to all those who have worked tirelessly to uphold the Christian presence in Jerusalem and to defend the Status Quo.

After the constructive intervention of the Prime Minister, The Churches look forward to engage with Minister Hanegbi, and with all those who love Jerusalem to ensure that Our Holy City, where our Christian presence continues to face challenges, remains a place where the three Monotheistic faiths may live and thrive together.

Following these recent developments we hereby announce that the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, that is the site of the crucifixion of Our Lord and also of His Resurrection, will be reopened to the pilgrims tomorrow, February 28th, 2018 at 4.00 AM

THEOPHILOS III Patriarch of Jerusalem

FRANCESCO PATTON Custos of the Holy Land

NOURHAN MANOUGIAN Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem

The statement of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu follows below as communicated by the Prime Minister's Media Adviser:

PMO Statement

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat have agreed to establish a professional team led by Minister Tzachi Hanegbi, with the participation of all relevant parties, to formulate a solution for the issue of municipal taxes on properties owned by churches that are not houses of worship

As part of the discussion between the Prime Minister's Office and the Jerusalem Municipality regarding churches' municipal taxes, Prime Minister Netanyahu and Jerusalem Mayor Barkat have agreed that a professional team led by Minister Hanegbi, including representatives of the Ministries of Finance, Foreign Affairs and the Interior and the Jerusalem Municipality, will formulate a solution to the issue of municipal taxes (which do not apply to houses of worship). The team will negotiate with the representatives of the churches to resolve the issue.

As a result, the Jerusalem Municipality is suspending the collection actions it has taken in recent weeks.

In addition, following a request by the heads of the churches to enter negotiations regarding the sale of land in Jerusalem, Prime Minister Netanyahu has asked Minister Hanegbi to examine the issue. While the Minister is doing so, all legislative activity on the matter will be suspended.

Israel is proud to be the only country in the Middle East where Christians and believers of all faiths have full freedom of religion and worship. Israel is home to a flourishing Christian community and welcomes its Christian friends from all over the world.

