

# **JERUSALEM CHURCHES UNITED TO PROTECT THE INTEGRITY OF THE CITY'S CHRISTIAN QUARTER AND TO MAINTAIN THE "PILGRIM ROUTE" OPEN FOR ALL**

Today His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III was joined by Jerusalem's Patriarchs and Heads of Churches for a vigil and a prayer that was held at the old city's Jaffa Gate to raise awareness about the dangers of having radical groups compromising the integrity and character of Jerusalem's Christian Quarter and threatening the access for pilgrims to the Holy shrines and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

It was stressed that they cannot remain silent while access to the Holy Sites is threatened and the hope of a lasting peace is diminished.

The Christian Leaders of Jerusalem further announced that they will be organising an "International Day of Prayer for the Christian Community and Christian Quarter of Jerusalem". They asked Christians from around the world to join them and to attend the event in Jerusalem in September 2019.

The following were the remarks delivered at the Vigil by H.H.B. Theophilos III:

"We stand here, at the Jaffa Gate, the heart of the Christian Quarter. We stand to pray for our beloved city. We stand as disciples, faithful to Christ in the place of his passion. We stand alongside the millions of pilgrims from every tribe and tongue who visit and bless this Holy City. We stand together with the tenants of our properties who have long provided an

open door to visitors and worshipers from far and near.

And from the bottom of our heart we thank our fellow Church leaders in Jerusalem for joining us and standing with us in solidarity; we all and together share our common beliefs, our common humanity and our common destiny; specific to these matters and general for our communities.

As a community of reconciliation, we refuse to allow radical groups to dilute the integrity and character of Jerusalem's Christian Quarter. We cannot remain silent while access to our Holy Sites is threatened and the hope of a lasting peace is diminished. We will not remain silent.

As a community of justice, we demand that the rule of law is upheld and stand united against any attempt to take Church properties by unlawful measures or to forcefully evict innocent tenants. We warn against any such attempt and we shall not fear to use all legitimate means to oppose and block this from occurring. We remain impassioned guardians of the Status Quo and will ensure that people of all faiths can flourish and thrive within the walls of this city.

We pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Today, we call upon Christians everywhere to join us in prayer and invite brothers and sisters to gather in September 2019 for an International Day of Prayer for the Christian Community and Quarter in Jerusalem. We look forward to welcoming Christian leaders and worshipers from around the world as we continue our fight to preserve and protect the Christian community here in the Holy Land.

With King David, the greatest ruler. We pray for the divine peace and security within these walls. (Psalm 122:6-7)"