

# **UNITED STATES CONGRESSIONAL MEMBERS MEET WITH PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS AND HEADS OF CHURCHES AT THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM**

On Wednesday, Oct. 2nd, 2019, His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem, together with representatives from the Council of Patriarchs and Heads of Churches, welcomed a United States Congressional delegation (CODEL) to the Patriarchate in order to discuss the role of the Churches in Jerusalem and some of the current challenges they face, including threats to the Status Quo of the Old City and its the multi-religious and multi-cultural character, such as the Jaffa Gate properties case.

Joining the CODEL were Senator Roger Wicker (R-Mississippi), Representative Alcee Hastings (D-Florida), Representative (R-South Carolina), and Representative Andrew Harris (R-Maryland), together with several staff members. Present with His Beatitude from the Heads of Churches were His Eminence Giacinto-Boulos Marcuzzo, Auxiliary Bishop of the Latin Patriarchate, and the Very Revd. Dr. Hosam Naoum from the Anglican Church, Dean of Saint George's Cathedral and Secretary of the Council of Patriarchs and Heads of Churches.

His Beatitude discussed the long-standing role of the Christian Churches in Jerusalem in protecting the Holy Sites for Jews, Christians, and Muslims, the importance of maintaining the Church's independence, which is being challenged today by particular radical groups and individuals who seek to undermine its vital role in the Holy Land, and the significant work of the Churches for all people throughout the

region.

The CODEL declared its enthusiasm to engage with the Churches in their historic and on-going work, learning more about the movements that threaten the Christian presence such as the Jaffa Gate case, which could potentially endanger the pilgrimage route to the Christian Quarter and Holy Sepulchre Church, and deepening channels of communication between the United States and the Churches in Jerusalem.

To this effect, the International Community of the Holy Sepulchre (ICOHS), which has been instrumental in facilitating contact between the Churches in Jerusalem and the representatives of the US government and other organizations, will continue its work in the United Kingdom and other countries, bridging parties and taking the lead on projects of common concern.

Upon completion of the meeting, representatives from the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the US Embassy escorted the CODEL to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where they venerated the sites of the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**From Secretariat-General**