

PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III HOLDS A CHRISTMAS RECEPTION FOR THE PRIME MINISTER OF PALESTINE AND THE JORDANIAN MINISTER OF INTERIOR

Soon after the Christmas vespers ended, on Thursday January 6, His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III and a delegation from the Jerusalem Patriarchate headed back to Bethlehem where Metropolitan Benedictos of Diosaecarea co-hosted, with the Patriarch of Jerusalem, the customary reception for the representative of His Excellency Mahmood Abbas the President of Palestine, Prime Minister of Palestine, His Excellency Mohammad Shtayyeh and the representative of His Majesty King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Abdulla II, Minister of Interior, His Excellency Mazin Abdellah Hilal Al Farrayeh as well as the Head of the Palestinian Presidential Committee for Christian Affairs, His Excellency Ramzi Khouri.

During dinner, His Beatitude thanked the Prime Minister and the Interior Minister for attending and expressed his gratitude to the support their countries are showing for the Patriarchate and the Holy City. His Beatitude raised the matter of the rising assaults committed against Christians, including physical and verbal attacks against priests and clergymen by some Israeli radical groups who “are committing their crimes in a deliberate attempt to expel Christians from Jerusalem and other parts of the Holy Land.”

The media campaign carried out by the Church leaders in

Jerusalem was a main topic in His Beatitude's speech, which shed light on the group efforts of the Heads of Churches in the Holy Land who came together last month to raise awareness about the assaults of these extremists against the Christian presence, "which has become targeted by Israeli radical groups, especially in Jaffa Gate in Jerusalem, the entrance of pilgrims to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the various monasteries and churches of the Old City, in addition to the actions of distorting the cultural and historical identity of the area of the New Gate."

In the speech which was read in Arabic by Fr. Issa Musleh, the press representative of the Patriarchate, His Beatitude said "We raise our voice loudly during this time of the year to confirm that the Holy Land is not only the land of the birth of Christ, but the land of the birth of Christianity which then was launched to the whole world. The entire Christian world is responsible for the survival of Christians in our beloved Holy Land and the Middle East in general. We affirm our demand to preserve the status quo, and to strengthen the Hashemite guardianship over the Islamic and Christian holy sites in the Holy Land, and to preserve the city's mosaic and diversity so that Jerusalem would be the spiritual center of the three monotheistic religions."

His beatitude mentioned the endless efforts of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem to support its people in and outside Jerusalem, where he mentioned the renovations that are taking place in Mar Elias Monastery on the way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, the renovations for the school of St. Dimitrius in Old City Jerusalem, the Lana housing project in Jerusalem of over 400 units, and the land in Beit Jala that is set to also establish a housing project, as well as the one in Bethlehem.

Towards the end, His Beatitude thanked again the efforts of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as well as the Palestinian government, which work in cooperation with the Palestinian Presidential Committee of Christian Affairs, to provide support for the projects and institutions of the Patriarchate to strengthen the authentic Christian presence in the Holy Land.

News by: Heba Hrimat.



