

A STATEMENT BY THE GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM REGARDING THE ILLEGAL TAKE OVER OF CHURCH LAND IN SILWAN BY AN ISRAELI RADICAL GROUP

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem condemned the storming of its land today, Tuesday, December 27, by an Israeli radical group in Wadi Hilweh in Silwan, south of the Old City of Jerusalem.

This radical group has no right or judicial backing in their favour to allow them to enter or occupy the land. The Patriarchate also condemns the fact that the raid took place with the protection of armed Israeli police and border guards.

The Patriarchate affirms that this piece of land, known as 'the red land', is five dunums in size (around 1.2 acres) and has been leased to the Sumrin family by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem since the beginning of the last century.

The Sumrin family is still cultivating it to this day, and this intrusion is a clear encroachment on the Patriarchate's properties in Jerusalem.

This incident represents a direct reaction of the radical Israeli groups to the Patriarchate's criticism of their expansionist practices that are being deliberately targeted against the Christian churches in Jerusalem, as His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem, made it clear in his speech during the Christmas

tree lighting ceremony in Jaffa Gate on Friday, December 16th.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem clarifies that an attempt was made to attack this land previously in 2008 when the municipality tried to use it. The Patriarchate went to court, fighting a judicial proceeding against the municipality, only to be surprised that an Israeli radical organization possessed documents linking this plot of land to the suspected forgery deal in 2004, which included the properties of Jaffa Gate.

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem stresses its commitment to all its rights, properties, and endowments, and that it will spare no effort to protect and defend its rights, and that it will not retreat from defending the Orthodox rights, which the Church and its people have adopted unanimously since His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III assumed his position as Patriarch of Jerusalem in 2005.

