

HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III WELCOMES EUROPEAN DIGNITARIES, REAFFIRMING COMMITMENT TO PROTECTING CHRISTIAN PRESENCE AND HERITAGE IN JERUSALEM

His Beatitude Theophilos III, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, received today at the headquarters of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem a high level delegation of European dignitaries, led by His Excellency Margaritis Schinas, Vice-President of the European Commission, and His Excellency Sven M.G. Koopmans, European Union Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process, along with distinguished members of the European Union Commission and the European diplomatic corps in Jerusalem and Ramallah.

The delegation embarked on a visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Christian Quarter of the Old City. There, they witnessed firsthand the imminent threats posed by radical Israeli groups to the Christian presence and the rich heritage in Jerusalem.

Later in the evening, the dignitaries, alongside the heads of Churches in Jerusalem, convened for a dinner at the Imperial Hotel, an emblematic bastion of the Christian struggle to safeguard the mosaic nature of Jerusalem. The gathering at this specific location meant to symbolise Christian steadfast determination to counter the attempts of radical groups, seeking to undermine the Christian and Muslim presence, thereby preserving the diverse character of the holy city.

In his address, Patriarch Theophilos eloquently highlighted

the challenges faced by the Christian communities in Jerusalem and the Holy Land. He expressed gratitude for the support received from the European Union and emphasised the need for continued attention and intervention from the international community. In his speech, the Patriarch of Jerusalem condemned radical groups that seek to force the Christian community out of their historic home and called for the preservation of the multi-religious character of Jerusalem and the Status Quo. H.B. suggested avenues for assistance included: international governmental delegations and diplomatic visits to raise awareness, support for the Hashemite Custodianship of the Holy Places in Jerusalem, and collective efforts to preserve the Christian Quarter and uphold the Status Quo. Patriarch Theophilos concluded his speech with an appeal to the governments of the European Union to persist in their support for the mission of defending the Christian presence and heritage in Jerusalem and the rest of the Holy Land.