

THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE OF IRELAND VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday afternoon, August 24 / September 6, 2023, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos received Mr Micheál Martin, TD, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defence of the Republic of Ireland.

In this meeting, His Beatitude informed Mr Martin about the challenges faced by the Christian community at the hands of radical Israeli elements, including verbal and physical attacks, and vandalism of Churches and Christian property. His Beatitude gave as an example the Holy Place Stella Maris in Haifa, which was visited for support by the President of Israel Mr Isaac Herzog, as well as our Abba Gerasimos Monastery.

His Beatitude also referred to the feast of the Transfiguration in Tabor, when the Israeli Fire Brigade prevented Christians from coming to the feast in an unacceptable manner.

The Christian Church of Jerusalem maintains good relations with the State of Israel and continues to advocate to encourage the State to seriously tackle and effectively deal with these radical elements of the society.

Jerusalem as the Holy City is the heart of identity for the three monotheistic faiths and needs to preserve its multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious character. The Holy Places attract thousands of pilgrims who contribute to Israel's tourism development. These Holy Places remain open to all and are centres of peaceful coexistence, symbiosis, and

dialogue.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which is the only Autocephalous Church of the Holy Land, is cooperating in a campaign to deal with these problems, including the Jordanian authorities, as the Hashemite King of Jordan has the Custodianship over the Islamic and Christian Holy Places of the Holy Land.

Thanking His Beatitude for the information, the Minister promised to convey these to the competent authorities and left to venerate the Holy Sepulchre.

From Secretariat-General