

# THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM RECEIVES THE CONSUL GENERAL OF FRANCE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

Jerusalem, The Holy Land

27 October 2023

The Consul General of France in Jerusalem, Mr Nikolaos Kassianidis, extended his respects to His Beatitude, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III in a visit to the Patriarchate this morning.

Mr. Kassianidis expressed his gratitude to His Beatitude for sparing his valuable time. He emphasized that this visit marked the inception of his tenure in Jerusalem, with the primary objective of gaining insights from the Patriarch on how the Patriarchate navigates the multifaceted challenges and difficulties faced by the churches in the Holy Land amidst the ongoing state of conflict.

The Patriarch, in response, conveyed that the Patriarchate stands as the oldest religious institution in the Holy Land, steadfastly dedicated to fostering reconciliation and peaceful coexistence among all residents of the region, irrespective of their religious or ethnic backgrounds. The core mission of the Patriarchate is to ensure accessibility to the Holy Places without any discrimination.

One notable aspect of this mission, His Beatitude added, is the cultivation of religious coexistence through educational institutions, where Christian and Muslim students study side by side, embracing diversity as a strength.

The Patriarch of Jerusalem stressed “The ongoing commitment of the churches in maintaining the Status Quo in the Holy Land,

particularly in the Old City of Jerusalem". His Beatitude drew attention to the airstrike at the Christian Shrine of the Patriarchate in Gaza, exemplifying the unwavering determination of Archbishop Alexios, who, amidst challenges, vowed to protect the church. The conversation also delved into the tragic strike at the Anglican hospital in Gaza, resulting in the loss of 470 lives.

Further discussions highlighted the persistent challenges that the Patriarchate faces, including encounters with radical Israelis at the property on Mount Zion. His Beatitude stressed that a viable solution to the complex political issues could be realized through a profound consideration of the role of religion.

It was reiterated that the Patriarchate, as an autocephalous Church and decision-making authority, maintains its autonomy and does not rely on external parties for statements or decisions. His Beatitude stressed that collaboration with other churches is pursued, with a commitment to preserving the Status Quo, guided by the Custodianship of His Majesty, the King of Jordan, over holy sites.

His Beatitude explained that the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem extends across Israel, Palestine, Jordan, and Qatar and that its collaboration with other churches and the Kingdom of Jordan is grounded in an ancient agreement dating back to AD 637 between the second Caliph Omar ibn Al-Khattab and the then Patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronios. This historical accord underscores the commitment to harmony and coexistence that continues to shape the Patriarchate's mission in the modern era.

**From Secretariat-General**