

# THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM AND THE ITALIAN CONSUL GENERAL HOLD A MEETING ADDRESSING GAZA CRISIS

Jerusalem, November 14, 2023

Today, His Beatitude Theophilos III, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, received in His office His Excellency Mr. Domenico Bellato, the Consul General of Italy in Jerusalem. The meeting comes at the onset of His Excellency's tenure, which commenced on October 8, 2023.

During the meeting, the Consul General conveyed his government's point of view on the ongoing war in Gaza and emphasized the importance of ensuring the safe departure of Italian citizens residing in the affected areas.

The Consul General sought insight into the Patriarchate's perspective on the political situation, prompting His Beatitude to stress the role of faith leaders in diffusing tensions. His Beatitude emphasized the need to envision a future beyond the conflict, promoting peace for all residents of the Holy Land.

Patriarch Theophilos also expressed concern for all the residents of Gaza who have been victims of unbearable living conditions. He called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and a total halt of all hostilities.

The Patriarch asserted the importance of preserving Jerusalem's multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious character and the historical significance of agreements, such as that between Caliph Omar Bin Al-Khattab and the Patriarch of Jerusalem Sophronios.

His Beatitude stressed the importance of the Hashemite custodianship over Muslim and Christian Holy Places and the adherence to the Status Quo while raising concerns regarding the Christian presence and threats posed by radical Israeli groups in various locations, including Mount Zion and the Mount of Olives.

His Beatitude underscored the collaborative efforts among churches to uphold biblical values of love, coexistence, and peace.

The meeting concluded with expressions of gratitude and an exchange of gifts, cementing the Consul General's commitment to fostering positive relationships for the well-being of Christians and all residents in the Holy Land.

**From Secretariat-General**