

THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM ADDRESSES THE URGENCY FOR A CEASEFIRE IN GAZA AND AFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO MULTIRELIGIOUS COEXISTENCE IN JERUSALEM

Tuesday, December 13, 2023

In a diplomatic visit, His Excellency Ambassador Sebastian Molina, the Representative of Chile to Ramallah, received a cordial welcome from The Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Theophilos III, at the Orthodox Patriarchate in the Holy City.

H.B. Opened his remarks with the hope of a quick ending to the atrocities in Gaza through an immediate ceasefire. H.E. Sebastian Molina reflected on his country's position regarding the war. He also highlighted the substantial number of Palestinian Orthodox Christians who migrated from Beit Jala, Bethlehem, and Shepherd's Field to Chile over the last two centuries. The Ambassador stressed that those Palestinian migrants and their descendants maintain a deep desire to uphold their pastoral and spiritual connection with the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, their Mother Church and the Mother of all churches.

Despite the Jerusalem Patriarchate's designating their pastoral responsibility to the Church of Antioch in the United States, as the Canon Laws of the Church dictate, the Patriarchate through H.B. expressed its genuine interest in keeping them in thought and prayer as well as personal engagement.

H.B. Theophilos III emphasized the religious significance of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, advocating for a solution to

political problems based on shared values from the scriptures: love for all, peace, and reconciliation. H.B. assured the Patriarchate of Jerusalem's pledge to defend the Status Quo in Jerusalem under the Hashemite Custodianship of King Abdullah and to promote respect for every individual in the city as the image of God.

Touching upon challenges with radical Israelis seeking exclusive control of Jerusalem, the Patriarch of Jerusalem underscored the city's multicultural and multireligious character. He added: "This inclusivity is evident in the thousands of pilgrims visiting holy places, particularly the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, irrespective of religious or ethnic backgrounds." H.B. pointed out that the Patriarchate of Jerusalem collaborates with other churches to advocate for peace and protect the rights of Christians in the Holy Land, rooted in the agreement between Patriarch Sophronios and Khalif Omar bin Khattab in the 7th century, recognizing the Patriarch of Jerusalem as an Ethnarch.

H.B. The Patriarch of Jerusalem also highlighted joint efforts of churches in sustaining schools where Christians and Muslims study together, fostering an environment for peaceful coexistence in society. H.E. Ambassador Sebastian Molina expressed gratitude for the update provided by His Beatitude and pledged to be cooperative and supportive of the Churches of the Holy Land. The meeting concluded with the exchange of gifts and expressions of gratitude.

From Secretariat-General