

THE NEWSPAPER 'KUL AL ARAB' APOLOGIZES TO THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

The following is an extract from the newspaper Kul Al Arab:

KUL AL ARAB Newspaper

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'Apology Announcement

The Newspaper Kul Al Arab on 6/4/2007 published an article against His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III and against the Law Office of Advocate Ahmad Al Mougrabi. In this article, incorrect information was reported causing damage to the reputation of His Beatitude and to the Patriarchate, concerning the disposal of the Patriarchate's properties at Jaffa Gate. The Newspaper Kul Al Arab states that the reporter who wrote the article did not pay the proper attention and was not certain of the credibility of the sources which provided him with the information.

After an examination and cross-checking done by the management of the newspaper, it was found that the sources that provided this news had personal benefits from this article. The reporter of our newspaper was not objective and did not apply to His Beatitude or to the Law Office in order to get their official reply on what was about to be published in the article. Instead, the reporter opted to use unsubstantiated accusations and incorrect information which was proved not to be true.

Therefore the Newspaper Kul Al Arab on the grounds of its

credibility, responsibility and duty towards its readers, apologizes to His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III and to the Law Office of Advocate Ahmad Al Mougrabi, Rami Moubrabi and Samer Zougbi for the damages caused to their reputation by the article. They accept His Beatitude's assurance that He is always leading the battle in protecting the assets, properties and endowments of the Patriarchate, acquiring them back and restoring them solely under the Patriarchate's ownership.'

THE CLEANING OF THE BASILICA OF THE NATIVITY IN BETHLEHEM, 2009.

The Armenians infringed upon the rights of the Orthodox on the Holy Shrines

According to the long-standing Status Quo in the Holy Land, the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem is cleaned each year by the three Major Christian Communities namely the Greek Orthodox, the Franciscan and the Armenian, as set by the Status Quo and on a date designated by the Orthodox, prior to the Orthodox Christmas Feast.

The procedure of this cleaning is determined by the long-standing Status Quo on the Holy Shrines which was established by bilateral and international treaties.

It should be noted that at the main Basilica rights of ownership and prayer have exclusively the Orthodox. The Franciscans and the Armenians have rights of prayer at the

Grotto of the Nativity after the Orthodox. The Armenians have right of prayer at the chapel situated at the north-eastern aisle of the Grotto's Basilica.

The absolute observance of the stipulations of the Status Quo contributes to the harmonic coexistence of the Christian Communities relating to the Holy Shrines without tension, discord or dispute.

With the hope of compliance to the prevailing Status Quo, members of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher from almost all areas of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem went to Bethlehem on Tuesday, 16th/29th of December 2009 and initiated the yearly cleaning, with the Franciscans and the Armenians participating up to the extent and at the specified spaces as stipulated by the prevailing Status Quo.

At the chapel which is in use by the Armenians in the northeast aisle of the Basilica, it is determined with accuracy and scholasticism the limits of the jurisdictions, the rights of cleaning of the Orthodox and the Armenian. The roof and the inner apses of this chapel, above the rings of the hanging oil-lamps (candles) are cleaned by the Orthodox, whereas the floor by the Armenians. Apart from other difficulties, which are created almost every year at this chapel by the Armenians towards the Orthodox, last year there was an intense attempt to prevent the Orthodox to move the ladder -in order to clean the apses and the roof- to the east, west, and north according to the Status Quo.

Last December, after repeated talks and remonstrations by the Greek Orthodox and after the intervention of the Palestinian Authority via a personal decision and order from President Mr. Mahmoud Abbas Abu Mazen, an agreement was suggested via the

Minister of the Palestinian Authority Mr. Zeyad El Bandak, a Greek Orthodox from Bethlehem. This agreement was signed by the representatives of the three Communities in Bethlehem, Greek Orthodox, Franciscan, and Armenian, and this agreement determines the procedure of cleaning the apses and roof of the aforementioned chapel.

This year, when the Orthodox put up the ladder in order to begin cleaning, the Armenian clergymen refused to leave the chapel as the agreement defines that only three Armenian clergy are to remain. This number was stipulated to avoid disputes by the many. This agreement also dictates the stay of three Greek Orthodox clergy when the Armenians clean.

His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III was present the entire time of the cleaning. The Greek Orthodox requested the absolute implementation of the agreement, not more nor less, from the Minister of the Palestinian Authority present and author of the agreement Mr. Zeyad El Bandak, and also from the Palestinian Police.

For hours the Armenians refused to leave. The Minister Mr. Zeyad El Bandak and the chief of the Palestinian Police in Bethlehem showed inaction for the implementation of the agreement. The Orthodox persisted until even the afternoon hours of Tuesday in demanding the adherence to their rights, knowing the tactics of the Armenians in creating illegal incidents at Holy Shrines in order to seize further rights.

As a consequence of this situation, the Basilica remained closed to the pilgrims. Due to this continuing situation and the unfinished cleaning, these pilgrims were compelled to stay outside in the courtyard, being unable to enter.

During this time, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem

Theophilos III, in the presence of the Consul of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Panayiotis Pouleas, had a personal telephone conversation with Mr. Spyridon Kouvelis the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece for issues relating to the Greek Diaspora, who arraigned this episode and requested the intervention of the Greek government to the President of the Palestinian Authority Mr. Mahmoud Abbas Abu Mazen.

After many efforts by us the Orthodox and by the representatives of the Palestinian Authority, it was agreed that we the Orthodox would put up the ladder for the cleaning, as it so happened, under the condition that eight clergies from each party would stay at the chapel for the duration of the cleaning.

Even so, the Armenian priests refused to exit and stayed while their numbers even increased at the corner of the chapel. We, the Orthodox, anticipating the intentions of the Armenians warned the police not to let them remain therein.

While our priest Rev. Archimandrite Fr. Filotheos had already climbed the ladder and started cleaning, the Armenians broke the police cordon, assaulted police officers, assaulted our priests, broke two fingers of Hieromonk Mattheos, injured the shoulder of Hierodeacon Athanasios, injured the neck with the possibility of concussion of Rev. Archimandrite Fr. Aristovoulos, injured Rev. Archmandrite Demetrios and the Patriarchal Representative in Qatar Rev. Archimandrite Fr. Makarios and hit other priests with chairs, broom handles, and threw down the aluminum ladder used for the cleaning.

Whilst these incidents were occurring, stronger Special Forces of the Palestinian Police arrived and partitioned us the Orthodox and the Armenians into separate cordons to avoid the escalation of clashes.

This unsettled atmosphere was prevalent for much time, until the Special Forces of the Police imposed upon the Armenians, drove them back and we the Orthodox put up the ladder again exercising our right and cleaned the apses of the chapel from above the rings as well as the partitions of the ceiling above the beams, of which the right of cleaning belongs to us the Orthodox as determined by the Status Quo.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem remonstrates for the repeated unacceptable conduct of the Armenians at the Holy Shrines and accuses them locally and internationally as provocateurs in creating problems, confusion and disorder at the Holy Shrines, especially in view of the celebrations of Christmas and despite the demonstration of goodwill, conciliatoriness and understanding of the Orthodox.

Chief Secretary's Office

CLASSIFICATION TO THE HAGIOLOGION OF THE MARTYR FILOUMENOS, SUPERIOR OF JACOB'S WELL

Jacob's Well, documented in the Old Testament (Gen. 33, 19) and in the New Testament (John 4), is one of the most authentic holy shrines of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, placed between the mountains of Ebal and Geribim in the area of Samaria. The Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre has guarded this through the centuries for future generations as a

precious inheritance. At this shrine members of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre have served as Superiors. One of these Superiors was Metropolitan of Gaza Sophronios, who began on August 30th 1908 the construction of the beautiful and spacious church where Jacob's Well is, but construction was halted in 1920. The divine Providence kept the honour of the completion of the church for the present Superior, Rev. Archimandrite Fr. Ioustinos.

In 1998 upon the foundations of the older church Rev. Archimandrite Fr. Ioustinos initiated the completion of this beautiful and ornate structure worthy of the history and the glory of the shrine at Jacob's Well. The church is named in honour of Saint Fotini the Samaritan, to whom the Lord revealed by Jacob's Well that He is The Messiah, Christ (John 4). Inside the church on the north side is a chapel named in honour of St. Ioustinos the Philosopher and Martyr, who originated from Nablus. Within the church on the south side there is another chapel named in honour of Archimandrite Filoumenos, member of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre who on the 16th/29th of November, 1979 died violently at Jacob's Well, where he served as Superior, and martyred.

At a young age, he came to Jerusalem and was ordained a schema monk of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre and the priesthood at the Mother of the Churches. He lived a saintly life, and died by martyrdom from an unjust and unreasoned attack at Jacob's Well on the 16th/29th, November 1979. The Holy and Sacred Synod of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, in a Synodic decision, classified him in its hagiologion at its Session 50th /11-9-2009.

For the enactment of this decision His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, escorted by Archbishops and Fathers went to Jacob's Well.

On his arrival, he was cordially received by the Superior Rev.

Archimandrite Fr. Ioustinos, fathers of the Brotherhood and fathers of other Orthodox churches, while a host of believers had already filled this great church and the courtyard to capacity.

After the Matins with the ceremony of the Blessing of the Bread being performed, a festive Holy Liturgy took place, presided over by His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, concelebrating with His Eminence Amvrosios Metropolitan of Nablus, His Eminence Isychios Metropolitan of Capitolas, the visiting Metropolitans of the Church of Cyprus His Eminence Neophytos of Morfou and Issaias of Tamassou, the assistant bishop of Avlonos His Eminence Antonios, His Eminence Dorotheos Archbishop of Avila, and the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Aristarchos Archbishop of Constantina, and numerous members of the Brotherhood. Also participating were fathers from other churches such as Cyprus, Greece, Russia, Romania, and Ukraine, who were leading groups of pilgrims. Also present were the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr. Sotirios Athanasiou, the Ambassador of Cyprus to Israel, Mr. Anastasios Tzionis, the diplomatic representative of Cyprus to the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Takis Demosthenous, and the Representative of the Cyprus Republic, Minister Emilios Nicolaou.

The Holy Liturgy was performed according to the order with Byzantine solemnity and splendour, the cantors chanted in the Byzantine style, in Greek and Arabic. Believers from different nationalities, Greeks, Cypriots, Arab-speakers, Russians, Romanians and Ukrainians, prayed in devoutness and participated in the mystery of the divine economy for our salvation, namely the incarnation of Christ, His Crucifixion and Resurrection, and the mystery of the divine Eucharist, their sanctification and the deification from grace.

This celebration acted as a testimony of Orthodoxy, a testimony of our True God, glorified by His saints. Saint Filoumenos, Archimandrite of the Brotherhood of the Holy

Sepulchre, through whom God is glorified again, died by martyrdom on the 16th/29th of November, 1979 at the Shrine of Jacob's Well, where he was the Superior. Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III read the Patriarchal and Synodic Praxis of the saint's classification in the hagiologion from the Great Entrance. This classification is in respect of the saintly life he lived and the fact that due to his faith, he was violently put to death by martyrdom at Jacob's Well during the Vespers ceremony.

The Archbishops and priests distributed the Holy Communion to the believers, while His Beatitude presented them with newly well painted icons of Hieromartyr Filoumenos. The establishment of the memory of Saint Filoumenos constitutes a celebration of Jacob's Well, a celebration for the Church of Jerusalem, for the Church of Cyprus, for the city of Nablus, and gradually, it will constitute a celebration for all Orthodox Churches, which after this announcement of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, will include him to their hagiologia.

The constructor of the church of Saint Fotini the Samaritan and the chapels of Saint Ioustinos and Saint Filoumenos, the Superior Rev. Archimandrite F. Ioustinos thanked His Beatitude for the decision in classifying the Saint and offered him a cross encrusted with precious stones for blessing. Then, following the Holy Liturgy he offered a sumptuous lenten meal to His Beatitude, His escorts and to all the participating believers.

Chief Secretary's Office

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A REPORT ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM OF THE PATRIARCHATE'S LAND PROPERTIES IN TALPIOT

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III and from the First day of His election as a Patriarch, has assigned the patriarchate's judicial and architectural team to search and investigate about the land properties owned by the patriarchate and to inquire about their status. In the year 2008 and through these investigations, it was ascertained that, the piece of land No. 2 plot 30288 with an area of 43 dunum located in Talpiot west of Jerusalem, is exposed to the danger of confiscation by the Municipality plans which had a public road going to be opened through it.

At the end of the year 2004 the Israeli local and municipal Authorities and the Israeli land Authority, presented the land planning project (No. 3/5834) subsumed in the frame of many other projects agreed upon in advance concerning the areas of **Talpiot and Giv'at Hamatos**, the two areas that surround the land property of the patriarchate mentioned above and which are within the land properties of (1948). This land is not related to the land of **St. Elias** even though it is near the village of **Beit Safafa**. The land is part of a continuous area of about 200 dunums owned by the patriarchate in the same area. More than half the 200 dunums are located inside the borders of (67), but the 43 dunums land mentioned above is located within the lands of west Jerusalem and stretches, in certain extents, to the so called " the forbidden area " that

separated between the borders of the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan at that time.

Through these investigations and through the procedures taken for the protection and preservation of this land it was ascertained that it still faces many dangers and risks, both from the Municipality of Jerusalem and from the contracts and deals signed by the deposed, monk Ireneos, resulting in difficult judicial and procedural conditions related to this land and its protection. These conditions imposes the need to embrace the Patriarchate, its decisions and actions against the confiscation of that land, not the impoverishment of the Patriarchate and the provocation of division in the Orthodox line by dispersing rumors and by calling for conspiracy meetings. The first of those dangers is the confiscation of the land mentioned above by the Municipality of Jerusalem, and the Israeli land Authority which is still present and exists till now; and if this happens the Municipality will implement all her decided plans on this land. The second danger is that the deposed, monk Ireneos rented this land twice to two different parties. One to a local constructor and the second to Nicolas Papadimas who is famous for his bad reputation and his intents and involvement with the settlers in relinquishing the real estates of Jaffa Gate. As for the third danger it is that of the deposed, monk Ireneos himself again by giving to the right-wing extremist Arie Golovenshish, the owner of company B.A.R.A., the right to manage and control all the Orthodox real estates in the country. In this specific report we will also reveal the details of the dangers of the contract signed by Ireneos to B.A.R.A.

The risk of confiscation – Municipality of Jerusalem and Israeli land Authority

The Israeli land planning project defined the land of the

patriarchate mentioned above as a “green area”: an open public area that can be confiscated for the opening of roads, gardens and public area. It is worth noting that the Israeli law for land planning and construction of the year 1965 stipulates that the ownership of the confiscated land is transferred and registered under the name of the municipality of Jerusalem, which means if this confiscation of the land succeeds the patriarchate loses it forever. The Deposed former Patriarch Irineos, during the period of his accession on the patriarchal throne and even after the announcement of the municipality’s plan of confiscation of this land, did nothing to object although he had the legal right to do so.

The dangers and risks as a result of the deals signed by the deposed, monk Irineos - (B.A.R.A. and Papadimas)

The contract signed between Irineos and B.A.R.A.

In late 2007 and while the Deposed former Patriarch Irineos had recognition as Patriarch by the Israeli government, he signed a contract with B.A.R.A. in which he gave to this company the complete and exclusive right of management and disposal with all the real estates and properties of the patriarchate including the monasteries, the churches in Jerusalem and the old city and in all the Holy Places. This company is owned by the right-wing extremist Arie Golovenshish. The danger resulting from this signed contract threatens all the Patriarchate’s properties including the land mentioned above. Through the patriarchate’s reactions and opposition relating to the above mentioned land, and the patriarchate’s legal team, the Patriarchate managed to expose this very dangerous contract, and confront it through the Courts. For more information and details about the points of this contract and the procedures undertaken by the patriarchate to challenge it please review the last chapter of

this report.

Lease contract signed by the traitor Irineos on the same piece of land with two different parties.

The traitor Irenenos signed a lease contract for the same piece of land mentioned above with two different parties. The first party is a local contractor well known for his continuous backing and support to Irineos, and still there are serious doubts about who stands behind this contractor and this contract since he is well known for his inability to solely invest and develop this land. Note that this agreement was signed in 2007, after the dismissal of Irineos. As for the second party, on the 15-09-2003 Irineos signed a lease contract on the same piece of land to the so called Nicolas Papadimas whose name was linked with the contracts signed on the properties of Jaffa Gate and who is at present wanted by the Interpol. This signed contact empowers Papadimas to a complete disposal of the land, and does not prevent him from transferring his acquired rights earned from this contract to any third party.

Procedures taken by the Patriarchate to save this land and opposing the confiscation and leakage.

The solution was to oppose and resist the municipality's land planning (No. 3/5834) and change the classification of this land from a "green area" and "open public area" to a "buildings" area suitable for building and to present a development project which concretes the Patriarchate's right of ownership and prevents the danger of confiscation forever; keeping in mind that this solution calls for an immediate presentation of complete project plans. This solution was discussed during the Holy Synod's session held on the 17/11/2008 where the following decisions were taken.

1. Exposing all contracts signed by Irineos with the local contractor and Papadimas and taking all procedures needed for canceling and annulling them.

2. To present an opposing plea against the municipality's land planning (confiscation plan)

3. To select one of the biggest land developing companies in order to achieve the following goals:-

- Changing the classification and category of the land from a "green land" and "open public area" to a "building" area suitable for building.
- Follow up with the municipality (through lengthy procedures) in order to get a construction license and building permits for this land
- The payment of all taxes, fees and surcharges which are estimated to be tens of millions of dollars
- The construction of not less than 100 apartments on an area of 12.000 square meters for the patriarchate and its community
- Only if the company succeeds in executing all the above, then the Patriarchate will sign a long term lease contract with the company for the rest of the buildings which the Municipality permits to build on the land. After the term of this contract the land and all the above buildings go back to the Patriarchate's ownership.
- There will not be an option clause in the contract to extend the term period of this contract.

In addition,

- To act in order to register, in the name of the Patriarchate, a land with an area of 17 dunums which is adjacent to the land of the Patriarchate (the 43 dunums

mentioned above); because at present it is registered under the name of the Israeli authorities; it is ours and we are claiming our right of its ownership

- It is also worth mentioning that some parties try to distort the real area of the land and claim that it is an area of 71 dunums which is not true. The real area is 43 dunums, in addition to the adjacent land area of 17 dunums on which the Israeli authorities claim ownership. Thus the total area is 60 dunums. But if there is a need to put pressure on the municipality, in order to increase the constructing project opportunities of success, the patriarchate will allow the virtual use of an area of up to 11 dunums from an adjacent land, which is also classified as a “public open area”, without its actual use for any additional buildings.

The company of Mr. Shraga Beran is one of the best companies for land development. He offered his services for the achievement of the above mentioned goals. He is a very famous business man with good reputation and a history full of achievements in this domain especially in changing the classification and category of lands. His group of companies has a history of more than forty years. Mr. Beran himself is a leftist business man therefore it is naturally that he will take part in the efforts done for the rebuttal of the risks that threaten the above mentioned land.

The negotiations with Beran company were held between September 2008 and April 2009 in which a conditional agreement for implementing all the above was signed on the 28/4/2009 As it is usually followed in the execution of big projects, a new company was registered for signing this specific contract, having a limited financial liability in order not to effect the mother Company. And the registered company will bear the name of the land's location which is “The Company of New

Giv'at Talpiot limited. And the signed contract with this company is stipulated with the implementation of all the items mentioned above within a timeframe of five years only and after this period the contract becomes automatically cancelled.

Foiling the attempts of B.A.R.A.. and the deposed, monk Irineos, to control the land properties and real estates of the Patriarchate.

1. On the 23/6/2008 B.A.R.A.. referred a letter to the Orthodox Patriarchate informing her about a contract signed with the removed monk Irineos in which the company is given the exclusively complete right of disposal and management of all the Patriarchate's properties. The company attached to the letter a copy of the contract that was signed with monk Irineos and requested a meeting with all the responsible people in the Patriarchate. It was revealed later that the owner of this company is the extremist right-wing leader Arie Golovenshish.

2. On the 7/7/2008 the Patriarchate referred an answer on the above mentioned letter to the company through her lawyers, rejecting any link or knowledge of this contract that the company claims.

3. On the 14/7/2009 B.A.R.A.. sent a second letter to the Patriarchate's advocate repeating its request mentioned in its first letter dated 23/6/2009

4. On the same day the Patriarchate answered through her lawyer to the company's letter and affirmed her stance in not recognizing the claim of the company. And she warned the company from committing any attack or violation on the patriarchate's properties otherwise the Patriarchate will resort to legal procedures and to the police.

5. On the 21/6/2008 B.A.R.A. referred to an arbitrator as per the agreement with the removed monk Irineos and brought a law suit against the patriarchate to force her to recognize the signed contract with Irineos. Thanks to the non-recognition of the Patriarchate of this arbitrator, who derives his power from the signed contract between the company and monk Ireneos, the arbitrator was not able to decide on the case and was forced to reject it.

6. On the 3/3/2009 B.A.R.A. referred to the central court with the same law suit referred to the arbitrator but this time it was against Ireneos too because he failed to fulfill his obligations towards the company as per the signed contract between the two and the Patriarchate non recognition of the contract.

7. On the 2/4/2009 the Patriarchate presented a list of defense to the central court where she affirmed her refusal to recognize the agreement between Irineos and B.A.R.A..

8. On June 2009 advocate Imad Shoukri, representing Irineos, presented a list of defenses stating clearly the validity of the contract in which his client waived the rights of the Patriarchate in her property for the benefit of B.A.R.A. This further shows again the links between the removed monk Irineos with the suspicious groups.

when the Patriarchate went to register the development agreement with Talpiot Hahadasha co. in the Land registry she was surprised to find that B.A.R.A. registered a notification on the land and on almost all the Patriarchate's land properties based on the contract signed with Ireneos which gives the company the exclusive and complete control on all the properties of the patriarchate to exploit them in the way the company sees it appropriate.

The patriarchate tried to cancel the contract between Irineos and B.A.R.A. in the land registry, but she didn't succeed therefore she referred to the central court of Jerusalem on the 14/7/2009 where she requested an injunction order which prevents B.A.R.A. to act according to this contract and according to the powers of attorney granted to the company by Irineos.

The patriarchate received a temporary injunction order against B.A.R.A. preventing the company from using the contract signed by Irineos in any institute or in registering any notification in the land registry. In the hearing session the witnesses were questioned. One of them was Bishop Isichios who was questioned by advocate Ze'ev Sherf on behalf of B.A.R.A. Advocate Sherf is the advocate of Ateret Cohanim Settler foundation and the advocate who pleads on behalf of the Settler companies in the cases of the real estates of Jaffa gate which were leaked during the era of the deposed Irineos

On the 28/7/2009 the central court issued a judicial order to the benefit of the Patriarchate in which the court affirmed the temporary injunction preventing B.A.R.A. from acting in concern to the real estates, of the Patriarchate, that she tried to control until a final decision on the case is given.

Chief Secretary's Office

A SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE

MOCKERY OF SACRED PERSONS AND SYMBOLS OF RELIGIONS

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem has condemned, through its representative in Nazareth, the offensive expressions and stances towards the Person of Jesus Christ and the Most Holy Theotokos, as well as the re-broadcasting thereof by the Television Network 10 of Israel, in one of its satirical programs.

Pursuant to the above, the Holy and Sacred Synod in its Session 44/11/24-02-2009 has condemned all forms of slanderous expressions or displays pertaining to sacred persons or symbols of every religion, and has declared its perseverance in continuing the inter-religion dialogue that the Jerusalem Patriarchate is cultivating for the promotion of harmonious co-existence and for a constructive collaboration between all religions, in the framework of mutual respect.

From the Chief-Secretariat

STATEMENT BY THE PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF THE CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM ON THE CURRENT DEVASTATING SITUATION IN GAZA

We, the Patriarchs, Bishops and the Heads of Christian Churches in Jerusalem, follow with deep concern, regret, and shock the war currently raging in the Gaza Strip and the

subsequent destruction, murder and bloodshed, especially at a time when we celebrate Christmas, the birth of the King of love and peace. As we express our deep sorrow at the renewed cycle of violence between Israelis and Palestinians and the continued absence of peace in our Holy Land , we denounce the ongoing hostilities in the Gaza Strip and all forms of violence and killings from all parties. We believe that the continuation of this bloodshed and violence will not lead to peace and justice but breed more hatred and hostility – and thus continued confrontation between the two peoples.

Accordingly, we call upon all officials of both parties to the conflict to return to their senses and refrain from all violent acts, which only bring destruction and tragedy, and urge them instead to work to resolve their differences through peaceful and non-violent means.

We also call upon the international community to fulfill its responsibilities and intervene immediately and actively stop the bloodshed and end all forms of confrontation; to work hard and strong to put an end to the current confrontation and remove the causes of conflict between the two peoples; and to finally resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with a just and comprehensive solution based on international resolutions.

To the various Palestinian factions we say: It is time to end your division and settle your differences. We call on all factions at this particular time to put the interests of the Palestinian people above personal and factional interests and to move immediately toward national comprehensive reconciliation and use all non-violent means to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

Finally, we raise our prayers to the Child in the manger to inspire the authorities and decision makers on both sides, the Israelis and Palestinians, for immediate action to end the current tragic

situation in the Gaza Strip. We pray for the victims, the wounded and the broken-hearted.

May the Lord God Almighty grant all those who have lost loved ones consolation and patience. We pray for all those living in panic and fear, that God may bless them with calm, tranquility and true peace.

We call on all to observe next Sunday, January 4, as a day for justice and peace in the land of peace.

+ Patriarch Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate

+ Patriarch Fuad Twal, Latin Patriarchate.

+ Patriarch Torkom II, Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Patriarchate.

Fr. Pier Battista Pizzaballa, ofm, Custody of the Holy Land

+ Anba Abraham, Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate.

+ Archbishop Swerios Malki Mourad, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate.

+ Abune Matthias, Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate

+ Archbishop Paul Nabil Sayyah, Maronite Patriarchal Exarchate.

+ Bishop Suheil Dawani, Episcopal Church of Jerusalem & the Middle East .

+ Bishop Munib Younan, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land.

+ Bishop Pierre Malki, Syrian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate

+ Bishop Youssef Zre'i, Greek Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate.

Fr. Raphael Minassian, Armenian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate

Jerusalem on 30 December 2008

ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT THE UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR OF THE ARMENIAN CLERGYMEN OF JERUSALEM

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem protests strongly against the unacceptable behaviour of the Armenian clergymen of Jerusalem, and denounces them internationally.

Beyond other problems created by the Armenians in the Holy Fire Ceremony and the annual cleaning of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, today, the fourth time in one year, they violently pushed the Greek Orthodox Guardian outside the Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre.

The presence of the Guardian of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in the Edicule during the procession of the Armenians around the Holy Sepulchre, at their feast of the Holy Cross, the 1st Sunday of Lent, Palm Sunday and Holy Saturday is an inalienable right of the Orthodox witnessed by written sources of the past and certified by experienced Greek priests of the present and members of the other Christian Communities of the Holy Land.

Despite discussions on the issue in the framework of the *Status Quo* Committee consisting of the Greek Orthodox, the Franciscans and the Armenians, despite correspondence conducted, despite a photograph of an Orthodox clergyman inside the Edicule at their feast of the Holy Cross in the year 1991, despite our arguments in front of the Holy Sepulchre today, the Armenians were not convinced to allow our guardian to enter the Edicule. So the only solution for us to support our right was to prevent them by a peaceful protest to finish their procession.

At this moment the Armenians, disrespecting the sacredness of the place, hit and wounded Greek Orthodox monks, and burst out in criminal violence against the Israel Police. The videoscoped scenes speak eloquently and thus no comment on them is necessary.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem remains unshakeable in support of its indisputable rights over the Holy Shrines, faithful to the principles of respect for the Status Quo and for a solution of the problems concerning the Holy Shrines through dialogue, and regrets the scandalizing of the consciences of the people because of this episode which we tried by all means to avoid.

Chief Secretary Office

Of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate

Of Jerusalem

Jerusalem

Sunday, November 9th, 2008

4TH ANOUNCEMENT OF THE HOLY AND SACRED SYNOD OF THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

The Holy and Sacred Synod in its 24th Session today, June 11th, 2007 concluded the following announcement:

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III and the Holy Synod trusted with the preservation and protection of Christianity's holiest Shrines and fully committed to fulfil their obligations towards God, the Church, the pious congregation and the peace of the region:

Hereby declare and guarantee that:

During the tenure of Patriarch Theophilos III thus far, it is categorically stated, that he has not sold, disposed of or entered into any lease agreements, directly or through an authorised representative, in relation to any piece of land or property, to any party, neither in our outside the Old City of Jerusalem, nor in Israel, the Palestinian Territories, Jordan or any other place in the world that the Patriarchate owns property, without the approval of the Holy Synod as delegated to the various Organs of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate.

Furthermore, any transaction, in the future, related to any land and/or property in Jerusalem will solely be concluded in accordance with the Law of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem for the benefit of the Patriarchate and its congregation.

Throughout his tenure, Patriarch Theophilos III has used the property of the Patriarchate with transparency and good management, solely for the benefit of the Church and its congregation.

In this respect, the Holy Synod reminds the relentless and fruitful efforts of Patriarch Theophilos to release hundreds of dunums of the Patriarchate's lands in Jerusalem, by paying off the heavy debt of 9 m. dollars, inherited by his predecessors.

The Patriarch and the Holy Synod will spare no effort in order to safeguard the ownership rights of the Patriarchate on any property which was transferred illegally and in violation of the Law of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem before

Patriarch Theophilos's tenure.

The Patriarch and the Holy Synod reiterate their commitment that they will continue their efforts in order to address the legitimate requests of the congregation and fulfil all their commitments so as to solve all relative issues.

From the Secretariat Office of the

Greek Orthodox Patriarchate

Of Jerusalem

THE OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM IS IN OPERATION

The august Patriarchate of Jerusalem, in recognizing the enormous possibilities that the internet offers as a means of two-way communication with believers, initiated and developed its official website on the internet with the personal solicitude of His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III.

For several months volunteers and distinguished friends of the Patriarchate and members of our staff have served with selfless devotion in partnership with the staff of the Unit of Medical Technology and Intelligent Information Systems of Ioannina University in developing the Patriarchate's website with the following address:

www.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/

This will be expanded to include more languages, particularly Arabic and English, aiming at a fair, objective and true presentation of the Patriarchate's rights and struggles for the world's Sacred Heritage – the Holy Shrines and its Greek Orthodox (Romeian Orthodox) Christian flock.

This website aspires to become the main public media platform for the Patriarchate and shall also post newsreel relating to the Holy Shrines, Holy Monasteries and Churches, people and serving Offices of our Patriarchate, together with announcements and news reports concerning the Patriarchate.

The Secretariat of the website is based at the Exarchate of the Holy Sepulchre in Athens under the management of the theologian and philologist Dr. Aikaterini Diamantopoulou, at the following address:

Website Secretariat

Exarchate of the Holy Sepulchre

18, Eretheos street, Plaka

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Fax : +30-210-3222542

e-mail : info@jerusalem-patriarchate.info

Chief Secretary's Office

3RD ANNOUNCEMENT ISSUED BY THE HOLY AND SACRED SYNOD REGARDING THE ISSUES RAISED IN AMMAN

The Holy and Sacred Synod in its 22nd all members session today, May 11th, 2007, examined the written defense of the three clergymen of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre, Archbishop of Sebastia Theodosios, Archimandrite Christoforos and Archimandrite Meletios and judged their behaviour as anticanonical and antiecclesiastical and for the sake of the maintenance of a climate of peace, reconciliation and unity in the politically sensitive area in which we live, and in a spirit of clemency, imposed the punishment of a severe rebuke to the two mentioned Archimandrites and of the two months suspension to the Archbishop of Sebastia, Mr. Theodosios, intending to remove these punishments, so long as in front of an established Synodical Committee, they will show a behaviour complying with the orders of the Gospel and the Sacred church rules.

Also the Holy and Sacred Synod approved the forwarding of a letter to the Prime Minister of Jordan in related to the reestablishment of the Mixed Council and decided the establishment of an Office Media of the Patriarchate in Amman -Jordan.

From the Secretariat Office of the
Greek Orthodox Patriarchate
Of Jerusalem