

THE APPEAL OF THE CHURCHES OF JERUSALEM REGARDING THE JAFFA GATE HOTELS

On Monday, June 23/July 6, 2020, the Churches of Jerusalem under the lead of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos made the following statement for rendering justice and the return of the Jaffa Gate Hotels Imperial and Petra to their rightful owner, the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem:

Joint Statement from the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem

We, the Heads of the various Churches and Christian Communities in Jerusalem, stand united in our commitment to the Status Quo which governs the status of the Holy Sites and the protections of the Churches. This is recognised by all the religious and political authorities in this Holy Land, and has always been upheld by the governments of our region.

The case of Jaffa Gate threatens this Status Quo. We are concerned by the recent judgment of the District Court of Jerusalem, which dismissed evidence demonstrating the Greek Orthodox Church's case, without even examining it. We strongly support the efforts of the Greek Orthodox Church to secure justice.

We view the attempts by radical groups to secure property at Jaffa Gate as a systematic attempt to undermine the integrity of the Holy City of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, to obstruct the Christian pilgrim route and to weaken the Christian presence. They do not only affect the Greek Orthodox Church, whose properties are at the centre of the case. This case is just part of a concerted effort by a group opposed to the Christian presence in Jerusalem to increase tensions between

communities, and to harm the harmonious diversity for which Jerusalem should be known.

We ask the Israeli government to act to secure the integrity of the Christian holy sites, the Christian heritage and patrimony, and the rights of the residents of the Christian Quarter of Jerusalem.

These are places to which over two billion Christians around the world look to as the geographical heart of their faith; they are places which millions of Christian pilgrims visit each year; and they are the places in which the Christians of this shared Holy Land live out their faith. We do not see this case as a mere property dispute, but one over the entrance, heart and continued function of the Christian Quarter as a place of living worship and pilgrimage.

Together with the Prophet Amos, we cry: "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

From Secretariat-General

NIKOLAOS MATAR DOES NOT BELONG TO THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

Fr. Nikolaos Matar, Dean Priest of the Holy Church of the Nativity of Theotokos in Corona town of the State of California in the U.S.A. continues to falsely claim that he acts under the blessing and guidance of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem despite the enclosed below Release Letter, which was issued to him since the year 2018 and was posted to his

canonical Ecclesiastical Authority, namely to His Eminence Bishop Antonios of Fasiani, in New York.

Protocole Number: 75

To His Eminence

Bishop of Fasiani

Mr. Antonios

Chancellor of the Holy Archdiocese

In New York

Your Eminence,

With much brotherly love I have sent to Your dearly beloved Eminence the Letter with protocole number 210/17 on 28th November 2017, regarding the case of Priest Nikolaos Matar in Corona of California at the Community of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos, who refused to subdue to the spiritual guidance of His Eminence the Archbishop of America.

Taking under consideration this case at the Meeting of our Holy and Sacred Synod, I dutifully notify you, that our Patriarchate has no relation with the afore mentioned Priest since the foundation of its Vicariate in America and up to the present, and we have issued a Release Letter to him, as he was canonically ordained by the Church of Jerusalem.

I therefore enclose a copy of his Release Letter, I convey the wishes and love of His Beatitude, from the All-holy and Life Giving Tomb of the Lord, I remain.

In the Holy City of Jerusalem 9th February, 2018.

With love in Christ,

Aristarchos

Archbishop of Constantina

Geronda Secretary-General

RELEASE LETTER

By this Patriarchal letter, We verify that the Reverend Father Nikolaos Matar, a priest of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, following a resolution of the Holy and Sacred Synod that was duly convened on 22 February 2018, has been canonically released from the roll of the clergy of the Patriarchate. This release was granted without prejudice or as a consequence of any ecclesiastical discipline, and Father Nikolaos Matar is free to be received into any canonical Orthodox jurisdiction without impediment.

In witness thereof, We have affixed Our seal to this Letter in the Holy City of Jerusalem, on the 19th day of March in the year of Our Lord 2018.

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem denounces the exploitation of its name and its website and announces it has no relation, cooperation, nor any communication with Father Nikolaos Matar, for the information and benefit of the Orthodox Congregation in America and elsewhere and that it is not being represented by any one in America.

From Secretariat-General

HAGIOTAPHITE ARCHIMANDRITE MARTYRIOS HAS DEPARTED THIS LIFE

The Hagiotaphite Brotherhood announces in sadness, nevertheless sadness in the Lord, Who was crucified in the flesh and resurrected from the dead, the departure from this world of its member Archimandrite Martyrios Dikey.

Archimandrite Martyrios, whose name in the world was Marinos Dikey, had an excellent education in computer training. He joined the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood as a Monk in September 2009 and was ordained a Deacon in November 2009. He was ordained a Priest in 2014 and became an Archimandrite in 2019.

He consciously served at his appointed ministries, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Secretariat-General Office, the Patriarchal School of Zion, the Finance Committee, the Exarchy of the Holy Sepulchre in Cyprus and in the last few years at the Shrine in Madaba.

On Monday morning, May 19/June 1, 2020, he was found dead in his room by the Hegoumen of the Monastery of Madaba Archimandrite Raphael, and was taken to the hospital where his death was confirmed as caused by a heart episode.

On Tuesday morning, May 20/ June 2, 2020, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated a memorial service for the repose of his soul at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen.

At noon of the same day, his funeral service was held in Madaba, led by His Eminence Archbishop Christophoros of Kyriakoupolis, with the participation of Archimandrites Inokentios and Ieronymos, Priests and members of the Madaba parish.

May his memory be everlasting.

From Secretariat-General

STATEMENT REGARDING THE REOPENING OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

Following the situation development in the Holy Land, we the Heads of the Three Communities, custodians of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre and Resurrection, wish to inform that starting on Sunday 24th this most Holy Place will be accessible again to the faithful for visits and prayers.

For safety reasons and in order to avoid the risk of a new spread of the COVID-19 infection, at the beginning the number will be limited (to 50 persons) and the Basilica will be accessible only to those who have no fever or symptoms of infection and are wearing suitable face coverings.

It will also be necessary to keep a minimal distance of 2 meters between each person and to avoid any act of devotion that might include physical contact such as touching and kissing the stones, icons, vestments and the personnel in the Basilica; as well as abide always by the given instructions.

From this Holy Place, in this Easter time, we continue our prayers, asking for the end of this pandemic.

THEOPHILOS III – Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem

FRANCESCO PATTON – Custos of the Holy Land

ABP. NOURHAN MANOUGIAN – Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem

IN RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS EPIDEMIC: PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III EXEMPTS TENANTS OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM FROM RENT FOR THE YEAR 2020

Jerusalem 28-3-2020

Following the noble initiative of His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan, Hashemite Custodian of the Islamic and Christian Holy Sites in the Holy Land, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, today exempted all tenants of properties of the Orthodox Church within the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem from rent for the year 2020. This action is taken in support of the diverse community of Jerusalem, and to enhance the steadfastness of its residents in light of the exceptional circumstances of the Coronavirus epidemic.

Patriarch Theophilos said that the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem wants to support the local community materially and morally to face the difficulties associated with the Coronavirus epidemic, adding that the doors of the Patriarchate are open to every person who needs help in facing

the current circumstances, and called on everyone to adhere to the instructions of the authorities regarding social distancing, home isolation and taking the necessary measures to overcome the crisis. His Beatitude prayed that Almighty God would lift the epidemic and send down His mercy upon his creation.

Father Issa Musleh, spokesperson for the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, said that His Beatitude Theophilos III is working to increase the effectiveness of the Patriarchate's institutions in facing the epidemic of the Coronavirus. Father Musleh added that in addition to this most recent step, the Patriarchate has led a campaign to support the residents of the Governorate of Bethlehem through the distribution of 1,200 food parcels, and has donated fifty thousand Jordanian Dinars to the Jordanian Ministry of Health. These are a matter of social responsibility, drawing on the Church's commitment to serve the community, and to provide everything possible in support of people in these difficult circumstances.

STATEMENT FOR THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

On Thursday, March 13/26, 2020, the Three Major Communities, namely the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Custody of the Holy Land of the Franciscans, and the Patriarchate of the Armenians in Jerusalem, who are responsible for the Status Quo, published the announcement stated below, stating that the Services at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre will continue to be held by the ministering Fathers of each Community, according to the Typikon of the

Status Quo. However there will be a significant decrease in the numbers of the faithful attending the services, in order to adhere to the safety precautions against COVID-19 virus.

“Following the evolvement of the situation in the Holy Land, we the Heads of the Three Communities to whom the Providence granted the grace and honour of proclaiming the lodes of the Lord in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre and Resurrection, wish to inform that the celebrations of the Communities, the Greek Orthodox, the Latin and the Armenian will continue regularly, even though for safety reasons and in order to avoid the risk of the diffusion of the COVID-19 infection, the number of participants in the celebrations will be limited to few persons and the Basilica will be accessible during the liturgies only.

We wish to assure that inside the Basilica, the prayers of the Three Communities will continue, rather intensify, asking the Heavenly Father the end of the pandemic, the recovery of the sick, the protection of the medical personnel, the wisdom for the Pastors and the Governors and the eternal salvation to those who lost their lives. We raise this prayer from the very place where, through the sacrifice of His own life on the Calvary and through His Resurrection from the Sepulchre on the third day, the only begotten and beloved Son Jesus Christ, defeated evil, sin and death.”

THEOPHILOS III
ARCH.
MANOUGIAN

FRANCESCO PATTON

NOURHAN

Greek Orthodox
Land

Custos of the Holy
Armenian Patriarch

Patriarch

of Jerusalem

of Jerusalem

STATEMENT OF THE THREE MAJOR COMMUNITIES FOR THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE REGARDING COVID-19

On Friday, March, 7/20, 2020, the Three Major Communities with the pilgrimage responsibility for the All-holy Shrines, namely the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Custody of the Holy Land of the Franciscans, and the Patriarchate of the Armenians in Jerusalem, released a Statement, specifying to the faithful Christians that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, with the Horrendous Golgotha and the All-Holy Tomb will remain open for the services, according to the existing Status Quo, and that they may come for their prayer, conforming to the instructions of the Local Authorities in order to protect their health. The Statement follows below;

“Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Our world is currently experiencing a time of crisis and emergency, whereas many countries and nations are combating the spread of COVID-19. In many places around the globe, the

infection is spreading rapidly and the victims are consistently increasing. The World Health Organization has declared the situation as a global pandemic.

In front of this dangerous situation, governments worldwide mobilized to resist and restrain the spread of this virus. In many places severe measures were adopted which resulted in restrictions of movement of persons maintaining operative only crucial facilities.

This dangerous situation has not passed over the Holy Land and the Holy City of Jerusalem in which all Sons of Abraham Jews, Christians and Muslims are raising their prayers to God Almighty. We are called to live this time in faith and confidence in the Lord's mercy and His care for all His creatures.

At the same time, we are called to adhere to the instructions of the competent civil authorities enacted to ensure the safety and well-being of the entire population.

Therefore, we the Heads of the Churches in charge of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem urge everyone to abide fully by the provisions for the public health, as they are published from time to time.

The communities living within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre will continue the ordinary life of the Church in conformity with the instructions for the public health. We will be united spiritually in our aim to preserve the centuries' long tradition of ongoing prayers in the Church even in these sad times when pilgrims cannot reach Jerusalem and local faithful are compelled to remain at their homes.

Accordingly, while maintaining the Church open we urge the worshipers to:

Refrain from any gatherings of more than 10 people in the same place and at the same time in the Basilica.

Keep a minimal distance of 2 meters between each person.

Avoid any act of devotion that might include physical contact such as touching and kissing the stones, touching icons, vestments and the personnel in the Basilica.

To abide always by the instructions of the authorities.

The Holy Sepulchre is the ultimate place of hope. Hope that faith will defeat doubt, light will defeat darkness and life will triumph over death. From this Holy Place and in this time of spiritual preparation for Easter and of global crisis we join our prayers to those of faithful of all religions, asking for the end of this pandemic. We pray for all those afflicted by the virus around the world and express our sympathy and gratitude to those who assist and take care of the victims.

THEOPHILOS III
ARCH.
MANOUGIAN

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of Jerusalem

of Jerusalem

STATEMENT OF THE CHURCHES OF JERUSALEM FOR COVID-19 VIRUS

A few days ago, the three Major Communities, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Custody of the Holy Land and the Patriarchate of the Armenians in Jerusalem published an announcement regarding the Nativity of the Basilica in Bethlehem for the reduction of COVID-19 virus transmission, and yesterday, March 1/14, 2020, all the Churches of Jerusalem under the lead of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos published the following statement, urging their congregations all over their jurisdictions to follow the instructions of their Civil Authorities and increase their works of prayer, alms-giving, and love, which are pleasing to God.

From Secretariat-General

A STATEMENT OF THE PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM

CONCERNING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

March 14, 2020

Our planet earth, at this difficult and challenging time, suffers from the COVID-19 pandemic that has affected so many people and reaped thousands of lives. To face this health and life-threatening pandemic, it is essential for our people and communities to adhere by the provisions and instructions of the civil authorities within the countries we live.

At the same time, we, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, call upon Almighty God to look on our situation and

be gracious to our suffering world. We are all called to live this time continuing to trust in our heavenly Father who takes care of all His creatures. It is therefore good that we intensify personal prayer, fasting and alms-giving and to walk in the light of God's love.

The Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem

- + Greek Orthodox Patriarchate
 - + Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Patriarchate
 - + Apostolic Administrator, Latin Patriarchate
 - + Custody of the Holy Land
 - + Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, Jerusalem
 - + Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate
 - + Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate
 - + Greek-Melkite-Catholic Patriarchate
 - + Maronite Patriarchal Exarchate
 - + Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East
 - + Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land
 - + Syrian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate
 - + Armenian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate
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ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE CHURCHES OF JERUSALEM REGARDING VIRUS COVID_19

On Monday, February 25/March 9, 2020, the Three Major Communities related to religious matters, the Rum-Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Custody of the Holy Land of the Franciscans and the Patriarchate of the Armenians in Jerusalem, published an Announcement, urging people to conform to the precautions and instructions of the Governmental Authorities' decisions, regarding the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem. The announcement follows below;

"Dear Brothers,

also in the Holy Land, we are experiencing a time of trial and emergency because of the virus COVID-19 that is now spreading all over the world. We are called to live this time continuing to trust in our Heavenly Father who takes care of all His creatures.

However, the ongoing emergency also makes us attentive to accomplish the provisions that the competent civil authorities enact to protect public health and the common good.

Therefore, in conformity with the recent decree of the Palestinian Ministry of Health, issued on Μάρτιος 5th 2020, with the present we the Heads of Churches in charge of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem urge everyone to adhere by the provisions and instruction of the civil authorities as they are detailed in the decree.

THEOPHILOS III
ARCH.

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THE HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT GRANTS SCHOLARSHIPS TO CHRISTIANS

The Government of Hungary has been working for years in the protection of the Christians internationally and in the Holy Land, and has recently announced to the Patriarchate its herein attached decision to grant scholarships to Palestinian Christians:

"To H.E. Archbishop of Constantina,

Your Eminence!

Hungary has continuously provided scholarships to talented Palestinian students since the 1970's among them many Christians, who are playing important roles in the Palestinian society. The Government of Hungary established the Stipendium Hungaricum programme 5 years ago, which created a new institutional framework for the international students' studies in Hungary. In this framework Hungary signed an agreement with the Ministry of Higher Education of Palestine on providing 60 full scholarships for talented Palestinian students for Bachelor, Master and PhD level studies. The Call for Application for the next year has been announced on the website of the Ministry of Higher Education with the deadline of 15th January, 2019. The Call for Application is available here: <http://www.mohe.pna.ps/scholarships/Post/5224>

Your Eminence,

I would like to turn your attention to this opportunity and request Your kind consideration of encouraging young Christian students to apply for these scholarships. Very soon I will send the Call for Application for the Christian Scholarship Programme, which will also be available.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please, do not hesitate to contact me or my office in Ramallah.

Kind regards,

Rada Csaba"

Details regarding the scholarships will be provided in due course.

Greek-Orthodox Arab-speaking young people interested in this may submit their applications through the Patriarchate.

From Secretariat-General

