

ISRAEL'S CIVIL ADMINISTRATION VISITS PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday the 14th/27th of March 2014, the General Military Commander of Israel's Civil Administration in the occupied territories of Bethlehem, Jericho and Samaria, Mr David Menachem, visited the Patriarchate accompanied by the Military Commander of Bethlehem, Mr Yael, his assistant Mr Yazeed and the Director of the Christian Affairs Department, Mr Sesar Margie.

Mr Menachem inquired His Beatitude about the needs of the Patriarchate as regards the impending feast of Easter and facilitations for the faithful in terms of crossing the checkpoints from the occupied territories to Jerusalem.

His Beatitude thanked the Military Commander for his cooperation and asked that the significance of Easter to Christians residing in Jerusalem be taken into account in terms of facilitating the participation in the feast of Christians from the occupied territories as well as of pilgrims.

In the context of the visit, His Beatitude offered Mr Menachem a silver representation of the transfer of the cluster of grapes by Israeli spies having visited the city of Jericho.

From the Secretariat-General

[httpv://youtu.be/u810bD_npII](http://youtu.be/u810bD_npII)



JORDANIAN MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS VISITS PATRIARCHATE

In the afternoon of Thursday, 14th/27th of March 2014, the Minister of Public Works of Jordan, Mr Sami Halasa, a Christian Rum Orthodox from Karak, South Jordan, visited the Patriarchate in the company of his family.

The Honourable Minister was received by His Beatitude Theophilos, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, in the presence of the Patriarchal Commissioner and the Elder Secretary-General.

An interesting discussion took place in the context of this meeting, on the close ties between our Patriarchate and the birthplace of Mr Halasa, namely the city of Karak; also, on the harmonious relations between the Patriarchate and the Hashemite family and the country of Jordan.

Having received His Beatitude's blessings, namely an icon of the Resurrection made of "madre perla" in Bethlehem, and pectoral crosses for the wife and children, the Minister's family went on to visit the Church of the Resurrection for veneration. The following day, a visit was scheduled to the Cavern and the Basilica of the Nativity.

From the Secretariat-General



PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM DECORATES CYPRIOT CHRISTOS PANTELIS

On Saturday the 9th/22nd of March 2014, H.B. Theophilos, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, conferred upon Cypriot pilgrim Mr Christos Pantelis, the title of Crusader of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher.

For more than twenty years now, Mr Christos Pantelis has been the Director of the Byzantine Choir and President of the Association of Cypriot Pilgrims to the Holy Sepulcher. Mr Pantelis and his choir chant during the feasts of the Holy Monastery of Hojeva and on His Beatitude's name-day. They visit in the company of pilgrims who have greatly contributed to the conservation of the All-holy Pilgrimage Sites, and financed the painting of icons, for instance the iconostasis of the town of Pkea Community in Northern Israel. They have also contributed towards the purchase of church vessels and the baptismal of infants from our congregation.

For his contribution to the choir and the Church as a whole, especially the Church of Jerusalem, His Beatitude conferred upon Mr Christos Pantelis this Hagiotope honorary title, inviting him to devote himself to similar activities for Northern Jordan too, where His Eminence Philoumenos, Archbishop of Pella, has been serving as Commissioner for the past year.

Touched and extending his thanks to His Beatitude, Mr Pantelis pledged to carry on supporting the work of the Church of Sion with the same zeal.

From the Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/9WnbFIK75nk>



“FOUR HOMES OF MERCY” IN BETHANY, OF THE LATE H. SIKSEL

On Thursday the 7th/20th of March 2014, Ms Randa Siksek and Ms Nadia George Karaa visited His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, in order to extend their thanks over the fact that He led the funeral service for the late Henrietta Siksek, who passed away on Saturday the 2nd/15th of March 2014, at the age of 96.

The late Henrietta Siksek was the founder of a very significant charitable project known as “Four Homes of Mercy” in Bethany. The foundation, of the Siksek family, provided shelter to thousands of elder people and children abandoned by their families, people suffering from incurable mental and other diseases. Today, the “Four Homes of Mercy” hosts approximately seventy residents.

During His meeting with Ms Randa Siksek, a relative of the late Henrietta Siksek, and Ms Nadia George Karaa, current Director of the “Homes”, His Beatitude praised the selfless and extensive charitable work of the late H. Siksek. In order to contribute to the continuation of this work, His Beatitude offered the amount of €10.000 to be deposited into a special bank account, its savings intended for the education of children residing at the foundation. Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina contributed 10.000 USD\$ for the same purpose.

Extending her thanks, Ms Randa Simon Siksek offered His Beatitude a text from the Old and New Testaments published in three volumes by the Church of Russia in 1821. The volumes belonged to the late George Siksek, who translated the Great Horologion from Greek into Arabic.

His Beatitude delivered the books to Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, who also serves as Librarian, for safekeeping.

From the Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/Yq1-xMfQWD8>



ISRAELI MINISTER OF TOURISM VISITS PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday the 26th of February/11th of March 2014, the Israeli Minister of Tourism, Mr Landau Uzi, accompanied by associates of his, visited the Patriarchate. The Honourable Minister was received by His Beatitude Theophilos, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, in the presence of Hagiotaphite Fathers.

In the context of this visit, His Beatitude thanked the Minister for his Ministry's approval of the request to supply water to the Monastery of Mount Tabor, and referred to the matter of the unhindered access of pilgrims to the Church of the Resurrection; to the Ceremony of the Holy Light on Easter Saturday; and to the anticipated visit of the Pope and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, next May.

In his response, the Minister assured His Beatitude that the

Ministry of Tourism proposes to unreservedly help and support the Patriarchate both as regards these and other issues.

To commemorate the visit, gifts were exchanged between His Beatitude and the Minister.

From the Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/17VF7lPSa0I>



THE ROMANIAN AMBASSADOR VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday the 12th/25th of February 2014, the Ambassador of Romania to Israel, Ms Andrea Păstârnac, visited the Patriarchate. The new Romanian Ambassador to Israel was received by His Beatitude Theophilos, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, in the presence of Hagiotaphite Fathers.

Ms Andrea Păstârnac visited the Patriarchate on the occasion of her recent appointment, and in order to express her joy over the agreement to restore the ecclesiastical communion between the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Patriarchate of Romania (see link <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2014/02/03/4288>). Ms Păstârnac delivered His Beatitude a letter of appreciation by the President of Romania, H.E. Mr Traian Băsescu, who recently visited Israel and the Patriarchate for the signed agreement, which paves the way for a new, fruitful relationship between the Patriarchate and the country and Church of Romania.

In the context of this visit, an interesting discussion took place about the situation of the Christians in the Holy Land and the support they receive from the Patriarchate and the Orthodox Embassies; also, on the contribution of the Patriarchate to the preservation of the status quo of the city of Jerusalem.

Gifts and courteous wishes were exchanged during the visit.

From the Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/ZbLaLUYRsY4>



THE METROPOLITAN OF NAZARETH AND THE NEW HEAD OF NAZARETH ORTHODOX COMMUNITY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday the 9th/22nd of February 2014, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and the new President of the Greek Orthodox (Rum Orthodox) Community of Nazareth, Ms Afaf Touma, accompanied by Council Members, visited the Patriarchate.

This was the first visit of Ms Touma to the Patriarchate in her capacity as President. In the context of the visit, His Beatitude wished Ms Touma strength and enlightenment from above in her new administrative tasks.

The President offered His Beatitude a painting representing the Pilgrimage Site of Nazareth, whereas His Beatitude

reciprocated with a golden pectoral cross.

His Beatitude talked with the Metropolitan of Nazareth, the President and the Council about issues pertaining to the spiritual life of the Community of Nazareth, which numbers approximately 18.000 members. Also discussed, were development plans as well as plans to restore the Church of the Holy Pilgrimage Site.

From the Secretariat-General

[httpv://youtu.be/K5SNd1yFjyQ](http://youtu.be/K5SNd1yFjyQ)



CYPRriot FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On the evening of Wednesday the 8th/19th of February 2014, the Cypriot Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Ioannis Kasoulides, while in Israel for a political visit, visited the Church of the Resurrection and the Patriarchate. Mr Kasoulides was accompanied by his personal associates and by the diplomatic delegates of the Republic of Cyprus to Israel and the Palestinian Autonomy.

The Minister and his associates were received by His Beatitude Theophilos, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, in the presence of Hagiotaphite Fathers.

An interesting discussion took place in the context of the visit, on the situation of the Christians in the Holy Land, especially Syria and the Middle East; also, on the need for a

peaceful coexistence between them and the adherents of other religions, Jews and Muslims, and for the peace-keeping contribution of the Patriarchate by means of maintaining private schools open to both Christians and Muslims. The meeting revolved around the spiritual and physical heritage of the Patriarchate in the Old City of Jerusalem, and the need to preserve its status as a context safeguarding the rights of Christians and the adherents of other religions.

Also raised was the problem caused by anarchic Palestinians trespassing on Patriarchate property in the Holy Monastery of Bethany, as well as its recent resolution on behalf of the Palestinian Autonomy, following actions taken by the Patriarchate, and the Greek and Cypriot Governments.

At the end of the meeting, presents were courteously exchanged between His Beatitude and the Minister, upon which Mr Kasoulides left for the remaining part of his mission.

From the Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/MOKu8pWYoG0>



SHAUN CASEY, AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVE TO THE MIDDLE EAST, VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday the 4th/17th of February 2014, Mr Shaun Casey, Special Advisor to Secretary of State John Kerry for Faith-based and Community Initiatives, representative of US President Obama

and mediator in the peace negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians, visited the Patriarchate.

Mr Casey was received by His Beatitude Theophilos, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem.

The aim of Mr Casey's visit was to bring His Beatitude up to date with the situation of Christians in the Holy Lands, the development of the peace negotiations and the scheduled visits of the Pope and the Ecumenical Patriarch.

His Beatitude talked to Mr Casey about the Patriarchate's pastoral work through the centuries and also about its peaceful contribution to all governments since the days of the Byzantines, Omar Hatab, the Ottoman Empire, the Government of the British Mandate in Palestine, Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Autonomy, to the present day; also about Jerusalem's quest to serve as a city open to two peoples and to the adherents of three different religions.

His Beatitude also referred to the problems facing the Patriarchate on account of extreme religious people in its pilgrimage site on the Hill of St Sion.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/bIchDQ9NtWI>



THE VICE-COUNCILLOR OF THE

REGION OF THESSALY VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday the 31st of January/13th of February 2014, Her Eminence Ms Georgia Kokkalis-Kouvelis, Vice-Councillor of the region of Thessaly, visited the Patriarchate in the company of her associates. Ms Kokkalis-Kouvelis was received by His Beatitude Theophilos, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, in the presence of Hagiotaphite Fathers.

In the context of this visit, a discussion took place on the All-holy Pilgrimage Sites of Orthodoxy in the Holy Land and their safekeeping by the Patriarchate and the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher, through the help of the Byzantine Empire in the past and, in the present day, of pious pilgrims from Greece.

Having received gifts from His Beatitude, Ms Kokkalis and her associates left for the Holy Sepulcher and the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/zqLTPnqV2k8>

