

THE JERUSALEM PATRIARCHATE HOSTS THE ORTHODOX-JEWISH DIALOGUE

The Academic Meeting of the Orthodox-Jewish Dialogue takes place in Jerusalem from Tuesday 22nd November/5th December to Thursday 24th November/7th December 2017. The Patriarchate hosts the meeting without covering accommodation costs.

Participants in this Dialogue are equally Jewish and Orthodox Academics, clergy or laity and their aim is to examine various aspects on both the Jewish and the Christian perspectives.

The topic of this year's Meeting is "The holiness of Jerusalem in Judaic and Christian tradition".

President of the Dialogue on behalf of Orthodoxy, is the Most Reverend Metropolitan Emmanuel of France. His Eminence belongs to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which took the initiative for the commencement and continuation of this Dialogue.

President on behalf of Judaism is Rabi Mr. David Rozen, who is the President of the International Jewish Committee on Religious Consultations (IJCIC).

His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos marked the opening of the Meeting with a reception for the approximately eighty members of the Dialogue at the Notre Dame hotel. His Beatitude's address at the opening of the Dialogue follows in the link below:

<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2017/12/05/36270>

Other speakers who addressed the members were Rabi Mr. David Rozen, Mrs. Saron Regev on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs of Israel and the Ambassador of Greece in Israel Mr. Demetrios Bikas on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece.

The proceedings began on Wednesday 23rd November/6th December 2017, according to the agenda of the Meeting. Professor Mr. Spyridon Tsitigos spoke on behalf of Orthodoxy in English, with the title "Jerusalem as archetypal of the religious".

The opening of the Dialogue was honoured by the presence of His All-holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who visited Jerusalem on the occasion of His honorary Doctorate of Philosophy by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Mount Scopus and He also addressed the members of the Dialogue.

The closure of the Dialogue proceedings on Thursday afternoon, 24th November/7th December 2017, was followed by a meal. The Jerusalem Patriarchate was represented by the Patriarchal Commissioner Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias and the Master of Ceremonies of the Patriarchate Archimandrite Bartholomew.

The speakers' presentations and the outcome of the Meeting are published by the Most Reverend Metropolitan of France in his journal with the title Emmanuel.

From Secretariat-General

ADDRESS OF H.H.B. THE

PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM TO THE ORTHODOX-JEWISH DIALOGUE AT THE NOTRE DAME CENTRE IN JERUSALEM

5 December 2017

Your All-Holiness,

Respected Members of this Dialogue,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We greet you warmly as you meet in the important dialogue, and we are especially pleased as this is the first time that this dialogue is meeting in this official and public way.

The timing of this dialogue could not be better. Our region is facing unexpected challenges and difficulties. There is an increased violence against the innocent, and many are displaced from their homes. There is a disturbing rise of radical groups, whose stated objectives threaten the multi-ethnic, and multi-religious tapestry of the Holy Land.

We know from our own experience, and must make better known, that true dialogue is the only way forward in times of conflict. Only true dialogue, which is founded on mutual respect, genuine understanding, and accurate knowledge, can lay the foundation we need for the well-being of our society, both here in the Holy Land and around the world. Only in true dialogue do we discover the many things that we have in common.

Dialogue between Orthodox Christianity and Judaism is of

particular importance, as we understand ourselves to be so deeply related to each other. Orthodoxy knows the depths of our roots not just in the great monotheistic tradition of Judaism, but also in matters of worship and church order. Even the design of our church buildings, with a veil that separates the altar from the main body of the Church, reflects this heritage.

But more deeply than this, of course, we share Abraham as our common spiritual father, whom we both also share with our Muslim sisters and brothers. Here is the tie that binds us as those who share a common heritage, a common humanity, and a common destiny. Jews, Christians, and Muslims, who live here in the Holy City of Jerusalem and the Holy Land also share a unique common home, which is the spiritual symbol for the whole world of the unity of all humankind. It is for this reason most of all that hundreds of thousands of pilgrims, Jews, Christians, and Muslims, as well as others, come to Jerusalem and the Holy Land every year to drink of the deep spiritual well of the holy places.

Even as we meet, this precious gift that has been entrusted to us by Divine Providence is under extreme threat.

The phenomena of the so-called "Price Tag Hate Crimes" and other acts of radical groups are attacks against us all, for they are focused mostly against holy sites, cemeteries, and places of worship. These acts are no doubt deeply disturbing to all of us, as history is littered with examples of such prejudice that can so easily turn to violence and persecution. We hope that this dialogue will condemn all such acts in the clearest possible terms, by whomever and against whomever they may be committed.

We are also experiencing here in Jerusalem a new attempt to intrude on the rights and privileges of our religious communities that have been protected for generations by the "Status Quo" customs and rules. There is in the Knesset a

draft "Bill of Church Lands" that seeks to limit significantly the rights of the Churches over their property in ways that violate our long-standing rights and privileges. While it is unclear what the progress of this bill will be, it is a sign of a new spirit that it is even being considered at all and supported by one third of the Knesset.

We are noticing also a disturbing rise in inaccurate and sometimes sensationalist media coverage, and this has led in some instances to a kind of reactivity in the response of some that is disproportionate to the issues at stake. This reactivity affects all our communities, Jewish, Christian and Muslim alike. This dialogue can have a crucial role to play in encouraging measured, thoughtful, proportionate responses by the civil authorities in our region to the situations that we face.

And finally we must mention the difficulty we face especially in the Christian Quarter, of the Old City of Jerusalem, from radical settler elements, that are openly working to undermine the inclusive nature of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and turn it into the exclusive domain of one group. As we have already said, the sign of Jerusalem is the sign of its universal significance. Should such radical elements succeed in their efforts, that universal significance would be lost. We are currently challenging this incursion in the courts, and once again we hope that this dialogue may be able to speak clearly and with conviction of the inherent right of all our religious communities to make their proper home in the Holy City of Jerusalem.

We are approaching a season of light that is holy to both Jews and Christians, a light that illumines Jerusalem and the Holy Land as the place of the divine-human encounter and to which the eyes of the world are turned every year in hope and expectation. May this dialogue show this light to the world and so advance the true and lasting bases for peace and reconciliation that it is our responsibility as religious

leaders to promote.

May God bless you in this work.

Thank you.

**ADDRESS AT THE MEETING OF
H.B.THE PATRIARCH OF
JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS WITH HIS
HOLINESS THE PATRIARCH OF
MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA CYRIL**

**An Address on the occasion of the celebration
of the Centenary of the Sacred Local Council
of the Russian Orthodox Church 1917-1918
and the restoration of the Patriarchate**

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

2 December 2017

We rejoice with your Your Holiness and all the Bishops, clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Russian Orthodox Church at home and abroad, in this year of the centenary celebrations of the Great Moscow Council and the Restoration of the

Patriarchate, and we bring with us the blessings of the Most Holy and Life-giving Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ and the prayers of the Christian community of the Holy Land.

There is a great cause for celebration of these two providential events. The All-Russia Council was the fruit of many years of preparation, and sought to restore to the Church of Russia its true nature of sobornost. In so doing, this Great Council has proved to be a fundamental sign of the conciliar nature of the Orthodox Church. Many eminent Russian theologians, bishops, priests, and laypeople contributed to the preparation and conduct of the Council itself and to its four volumes of definitions that touched on every aspect of the life of the Church.

The Council and its work were all the more remarkable in the face of the complex political climate that had existed in the country since 1905, and which intensified after the October revolution in 1917. However, in spite of huge difficulties, the Council met in three sessions from 1917 to 1918, and at one of its first sessions, having decided to restore the Patriarchate, on 5 November 1917, Saint Tikhon was elected the first Patriarch of Moscow since Tsar Peter the Great abolished the office after the death of Patriarch Adrian in 1700.

The Russian Orthodox Church at home and abroad was able to face the next 70 years with the strength that the work of the Council and the re-establishment of the Patriarchate provided. If the work of the Council itself was never finished because of circumstances beyond the Church's control, yet in the recovery of a deeper sense of sobornost, the Council showed the way for the Orthodox world to renew the conciliar nature of Orthodoxy. This was one of the Council's great gifts to the Orthodox world.

A century after the opening of this historic Local Council and the election of Saint Tikhon as Patriarch of Moscow, the Church of Russia is experiencing a new birth of freedom. While

the scars of the wounds that the conflicts of the 20th century inflicted on humanity have yet to heal completely, these first years of the 21st century have opened new paths for the Russian Orthodox Church, not least in the healing of the schism with the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia. This year too we have celebrated in Jerusalem the 170th anniversary of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, which throughout its history has been a great support to pilgrims from Russia.

And yet a century after the Local Council and the Restoration of the Patriarchate still sees the Church under terrible pressure in many parts of the world, not least in the Holy Land and the Middle East. As a Church that has known your share of sufferings, you have also been supportive of the Church in the Holy Land as we have been facing our particular difficulties, and we wish to express our gratitude to you, Your Holiness, for the recent statement in support of the Christian presence in the Middle East that you issued with His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury during his recent visit here.

We, in the Holy Land, are facing a number of specific threats.

For some time now there has been a rise in so-called "Price Tag Hate Crimes", which are primarily directed against religious communities and holy sites, including cemeteries. While the government has condemned such acts, there is yet to be an effective enforcement of laws against such crimes, which are carried out by radical extremists. Such crimes result in a de-stabilizing of our society, which has known peaceful and respectful co-existence for generations.

We are also facing an assault on the traditional freedoms of the Church that are enshrined in the "Status Quo", the set of customs and rules acknowledged by the international community and which guarantee the rights and responsibilities of the Churches. Recently in the Knesset there has been a draft bill

circulating among members that, if passed, would severely intrude on the rights of the Churches over their prerogatives to deal freely with their properties. While it is not clear if this bill would pass, it is deeply disturbing that it should be circulating at all, and that it has been backed by one third of the members of the Knesset, for it represents a disturbing development on the part of some, with respect to an understanding of the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious landscape of Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

And perhaps, most significantly, we are facing a threat to the Christian Quarter and the Christian presence in the Old City of Jerusalem in the so-called "Jaffa Gate" case, in which the District Court wrongfully found in favour of a radical settler group whose stated intent is to make Jerusalem an exclusive city, rather than the inclusive community that it has been for centuries. We believe that this decision was reached on the basis of a poor examination both of the evidence and of the law, and we are appealing this judgement to the high court and we are taking our case to the international community.

We are grateful to Almighty God that the Heads of the Churches and Christian communities of the Holy Land are united in our resolve to resist these threats to our life and our very existence, and this solidarity is a great witness and source of our strength. We are encouraged by the strong support that we have been receiving from Churches and governments around the world, and we are continuing to press our case so that we may maintain the true integrity of the Holy City of Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

As we give thanks to you, Your Holiness, in this great anniversary year for the Russian Orthodox Church, we re-commit ourselves to the long-standing and strong bonds of unity and affection that unite the Church of Russia with the Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of all the Churches. We pray that the strength that the Local Council of 1917-1918 and the restoration of the Patriarchate gave to the Russian Church may

deepen, and that our unity in the holy Orthodox faith and in the Eucharistic feast may also be a support to the Christian community of Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

May God grant you, Vladyka, many years, and may God bless the peoples of your beloved Russia and our beloved Holy Land.

Thank you.

**ADDRESS OF H.H.B. THE
PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM
THEOPHILOS AT THE MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF
THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
IN AMMAN**

His Beatitude Theophillos III
Patriarch of Jerusalem

17 November 2017

Mr Secretary General,

Respected Members of the Executive Committee,

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We welcome you to Amman in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II, and we bring you the blessings of the Holy City of Jerusalem. We are delighted to be able to host this meeting of your Executive Committee, and we wish to express our continued commitment to the work of the World Council of Churches.

You come to the Middle East at a difficult time for our region. The world community is united in the view that a vital, vibrant Christian community is an essential part of the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious landscape of the Middle East. We are indigenous to this region, and indeed the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the oldest continuous religious institution here.

The roots of our Christian community are deep. They have been nourished by the blood of the prophets, saints and martyrs down the ages, and by the redeeming blood of our Lord Jesus Christ himself.

In our day, our Christian community is facing an unprecedented and serious threat.

While we understand that you have an agenda that you need to attend to, please allow us to bring to your attention some details of the present situation of the undermining of the "Status Quo": those set of customs and rules that guarantee the Christian presence specifically in Jerusalem of which it is urgent that you are aware. We have been making this very same case to religious and governmental leaders around the world and now wish to bring this matter to our World Council of Churches through you.

As you know, for generations the sacred character of the Holy Land has been protected by the Status Quo, which is recognized by both religious and civil authorities and the international community as protecting and guaranteeing the rights and privileges of the Churches, especially with respect to the

holy sites and to other religious activity. The provisions of the Status Quo have been upheld carefully by successive civil authorities in our region.

Over the last several months, we have seen a new level of threat to the stability of our multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious society in a number of attacks on religious communities – and especially on Christian communities.

There has been a marked and disturbing increase in so-called “price-tag hate crimes”, which are directed in many cases to the vandalism and desecration of holy places and cemeteries. While these acts have been condemned by all, including governments, they continue, and effective ways of preventing them and punishing the perpetrators are still to be found.

More threatening to the rights of religious communities is a proposed bill that is circulating in the Knesset that would, if passed, severely intrude on the rights of the Churches over their properties. Whether this bill has a chance of being passed is not the point; the mere fact that it has gained the signatures of one third of the members of the Knesset and should be discussed at all, is a new level of threat to the diversity of our society and the manner in which holy places have been managed and cared for, especially in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Most significant and worrying, however, are the underhanded actions of radical settler groups who in the majority of cases acquire property in Jerusalem’s Old City and elsewhere, utilizing illegitimate methods of coercion that lack proper authority. The most recent issue concerns the properties owned by the Patriarchate and known as the “Jaffa Gate” case, in which a radical settler group that has for many years been attempting to take over properties in the Christian Quarter in the Old City and thereby diminish the Christian presence in Jerusalem was given the properties. They have claimed to have acquired these properties through what we consider

“illegitimate agreements that lack due authority”. Crucially negative was the fact that the District Court handed down a wrongful judgment in favour of the settler group. This judgment was in our view incorrect with respect to matters of the law and we are contesting it in the High Court, and bringing the matter to the international community for awareness and support.

It is the firm position of the Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem that the movement of these radical settler groups must be curbed and controlled and their intimidating tactics to exclude non-Jews from Jerusalem must be resisted to preserve the defining multi-faith tapestry of the Old City.

A number of religious leaders, including His All-holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch, His Holiness the Pope, and His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, have issued important statements in support of the Christian Community, the Heads of the Churches in the Holy Land, and the Patriarchate. It is important to emphasize to this Executive Committee that we enjoy a deep and complete unity of understanding and purpose among all the Heads of the Churches, and this has been a tremendous encouragement to us all, and of course, it is one of the great fruits in our region of our ongoing ecumenical endeavor. For this unity of understanding and purpose, we give thanks to God.

We hope very much that our World Council of Churches will continue in its mission in the Middle East to secure the position of the Christian Community against the new threats to our existence and freedom. We are deeply thankful for all the support that the World Council of Churches has always shown to the Christian community for the Holy Land and the Middle East, and we look forward to being able to join forces with you in order to increase advocacy for the common benefit of all our peoples and in deepening the peaceful co-existence among Jews, Christians and Muslims.

We pray that God will bless your deliberations in this meeting, and we assure you of our prayers and support. We take this opportunity to thank His Majesty, under whose rule the people of the Hashemite Kingdom enjoy religious freedom, tolerance, and co-existence.

Thank you.

ADDRESS OF H.H.B. THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM AT THE CONFERENCE ON PLACES OF WORSHIP AND HOLY CITES IN CYPRUS

Conference on Places of Worship and Holy Sites
sponsored by the Conference of European Churches

Jerusalem as a Holy Site

His Beatitude Theophilos III
Patriarch of Jerusalem

9 November 2017

Your Beatitude Archbishop Chrysostom of Cyprus,

Dr. Elizabeth Kitamovitch,

Respected Participants in this Conference,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The matter before us is one of the utmost seriousness. The invitation to this conference outlined, in a concise and clear way, why the status and protection of Holy Sites is of such urgent importance.

Holy Sites are, of course, first and foremost holy to the particular religious tradition of which they are a witness. They are primarily places of worship and spiritual refreshment, and they are often the destination of pilgrims as well as frequently the regular places of worship for local religious communities.

But, as this conference recognizes, the significance and importance of Holy Sites are broader. To quote from a document preliminary to this gathering, "holy places can be sources of tensions which can affect peaceful coexistence instead of fostering social plurality and diversity." This conference recognizes that holy places have a wider significance and are "not only the concern of believers."

Fundamentally this conference acknowledges that the international community must understand and support the fact that there is "a particular right to manage holy sites, a right to own them, to gather there for religious purposes, and to perform religious ceremonies...we are speaking about the living heritage of holy places."

We cannot overstate the crucial nature of these primary points in any discussion about holy places, and we wish to elaborate on them by considering Jerusalem as a holy site.

When we think of Jerusalem, we often think of the city as a place of holy sites, and this is true. Contained within the Old City there are scores of holy sites, and in the immediate vicinity there are many more. But today we wish to think of Jerusalem as a whole as a holy site in and of itself. We believe that this perspective will give us a singular insight

into the subject before us.

There are many holy sites around the world, and many holy places that are the object of veneration to more than one religious group. But there is no other place on earth like Jerusalem. Jerusalem is unique in so many respects and this is well enough known that we do not need to enumerate those details here.

Yet we do wish to put forward the concept of Jerusalem as a holy site in and of itself, and not only as a geographical area that contains holy sites.

What is the significance of this position?

First, to say that the city itself is a holy site is to say something about its fundamental religious and spiritual identity. While there are or have been other cities and towns that have taken the adjective “holy” to themselves – one thinks of Constantinople and Rome, for example – no other city has had an identity similar to Jerusalem. And no other city has borne this kind of identity for anywhere near as long as Jerusalem.

When we consider that Jerusalem is holy not to one, but to three of the world’s major religious traditions, we find that Jerusalem sets itself apart in every respect.

But as we know, holiness is not just about geography. It is also about a less tangible, but just as compelling landscape – the landscape of the divine-human encounter.

The Holy Land is the only place on earth where, so the Abrahamic traditions affirm, God has communicated with humanity in clear and direct ways, and Jerusalem has been at the centre of this divine-human activity for millennia.

This is the only place on earth that has been visited by all the prophets, that has been nurtured by their blood, and that

has been nurtured by the blood of the Righteous One, Jesus Christ.

This is the place on earth that gives hope to countless millions of people, near and far, who understand deep within their souls that Jerusalem is not simply an earthly city, but a promise of the peace and unity of all humankind. There is no more compelling evidence of this than in the thousands of pilgrims who flock to Jerusalem every month and who long to drink from the spiritual springs of the water of life that Jerusalem provides.

We cannot deny that Jerusalem is a contested holy site. Human failure and human sinfulness scar Jerusalem as much as they scar every other endeavour. But this is itself also evidence of the fundamental identity of Jerusalem as a holy site, for in these difficulties the eye of faith sees the force of evil that attempts to destroy the power that Jerusalem holds in its vocation as the true spiritual home of all humanity.

We must also always remember a great truth about holy places. While it is clear that holy places fall under the care and protection of particular religious groups, and for administrative purposes in our contemporary world we speak of "ownership" and the care and guardianship of them, it is crucial from a spiritual perspective that we understand that we do not possess holy places; they possess us. They embrace us in the mystery of the divine-human encounter. While divine providence has given the holy places into our care, we give ourselves to these holy places so that we may be true witnesses, true servants of the martyria of the holy places.

All of these observations mean that any undermining of the true nature of holy places is a very serious matter indeed. This conference is considering a range of important questions. Here we would like to give examples of how the fundamental nature of Jerusalem as a holy site is being undermined.

For generations the sacred character of the Holy Land has been protected by the Status Quo, which is recognized by both religious and civil authorities and the international community as protecting and guaranteeing the rights and privileges of the Churches, especially with respect to the holy sites and to other religious activity. The provisions of the Status Quo have been upheld carefully by successive civil authorities in our region.

Over the last several months, we have seen a new level of threat to the stability of our multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious society of which our holy sites are concrete evidence.

Over the last few years, there has been a marked and disturbing increase in so-called "price tag hate crimes," which are directed in many cases to the vandalism and desecration of holy places. While these acts have been condemned by all, including governments, they continue, and effective ways of preventing them and punishing the perpetrators are still to be found.

More threatening to the Status Quo and the rights of religious minorities is a proposed bill that is circulating in the Knesset that would, if passed, severely intrude on the rights of the Churches over their properties. Whether this bill has a chance of being passed is not the point; the mere fact that it has gained the signatures of one third of members of the Knesset and should be discussed at all is a new level of threat to the diversity of our society and the manner in which holy places have been managed and cared for.

Most significant and worrying, however, are the underhanded actions of radical settler groups who in the majority of cases acquire property in Jerusalem's Old City and elsewhere utilizing illegitimate methods of coercion and undue authority. The most recent issue concerns the properties owned by the Patriarchate and known as the "I at Jafa Gate" case, in

which a radical settler group that has for many years been attempting to take over properties in the Christian Quarter of the Old City and thereby diminish the Christian presence in Serti salem. They have claimed to have acquired these properties through what we consider “illegitimate agreements that lack due authority”. Crucially negative was the fact that the District Court handed down a wrongful judgment in favour of the settler group. This judgment was in our view incorrect with respect to matters of the law and we are contesting it in the High Court, and bringing the matter to the international community for support.

The movement of these radical settler groups must be curbed and controlled end their intimidating tactics to rid Jerusalem of non-Jews must be resisted to preserve the crucial multi-faith tapestry of Jerusalem.

When we understand Jerusalem itself as a holy site, and not just the place where holy sites are found, these threats become all the more serious. And these incursions into traditional rights and protections of the Church in the Holy Land affect not just one religious group, but all.

As we consider in this conference what we all understand to be the “living heritage of holy places,” the issues that are currently before us in Jerusalem are of pressing concern to us all.

Thank you.

JERUSALEM

PATRIARCHATE

PARTICIPATES AT THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF PASTORAL HEALTH CARE IN RHODES

From Wednesday 28th September/11th October to 2nd/15th October 2017, at the Holy Metropolis of Rhodes, Jerusalem Patriarchate participated at the 4th International Conference of Pastoral Health Care of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, with its representative Nun Euphemia, who serves at the Jerusalem Patriarchate Website.

At this Conference the aforementioned Nun read the address of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos as written below:

Most Reverend Metropolitan Cyril of Rhodes,

Most Reverend Archbishops,

Reverend Fathers,

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Venerable Jerusalem Patriarchate salutes with great joy the beginning of the 4th International Conference of Pastoral Health Care, which is successfully organized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the topic "Rekindling Hope – Finding hope in the difficulties of life". We are also glad as we participate in this Conference for the first time by the invitation of His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

Undeniably the role of the Church in health care has always been determinant and pioneering; since the early Byzantine years, with the initiative of the Church, General Hospitals, Hospitals for the Mentally ill, Hospitals for the lepers, Old peoples' homes, Orphanages and Social Benefits' Foundations were founded, operated and sustained. The contribution of our Church Saints to the health care is well known. We can mention among others, St. Basil the Great with the marvellous Vasiliada, St. Chrysostom, St. Theodosios the Cenobiarch, St. Savvas the Sanctified, St. John the Merciful, St. Philothei of Athens.

This is the factual manifestation of the commandment that our Master and Lord gave us by His own example, as St. John Damascene says, a commandment sealed with "the blood, the water, the baptism", which "were issued from the wound, through which man, the great wound was healed", whose fall generated both physical and psychic impact (Vespers, Thomas Sunday). Moreover, the Evangelic message "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me" (Mat.35:36), does not draw our attention only to the illness of the body, but also to the mental distress that the patient may undergo, which demands psychological and emotional support.

Those suffering from physical or mental illness or even unfortunate social status, such as the refugees nowadays, have a special psychology, since existential matters can easily unsettle faith and hope in God, debilitate the person and drive him to despair. Nevertheless, by the grace of God, which His Ministers are able to convey to our fellow men, pain is experienced as a gift and illness as a chance "so that the dispersed children of God" are gathered "in one" (John 11:52). Physical illness acts as a means of humility to the soul of the faithful, allowing the grace of the Holy Spirit guide the

person to "the likeness", so that he can realise St. Paul's saying "I rejoice in my sufferings" (Col. 1:24).

Therefore, the presence of scientifically and spiritually competent representatives of the Church, who convey the message of the Resurrected Christ as His witnesses to the patients, can be determining for the salvation of their souls. We are indebted to our fellow men to convey faith and hope, displaying affection and love, not centred in material things and temporary interest, but in the outcry of the humble spirit for incorrupt goods and the eternal Kingdom in heaven. Through such a state of the soul the faithful feels the power of our Saviour Jesus Christ coming to dwell in him, and he can exclaim rejoicing "I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry" (Psalm 40:1) and "Lord thou has lifted up the light of thy countenance upon us" (Psalm 4:7).

Rekindling thus hope, that "the harvest is truly great" (Luke 10:2) but the labourers are able to convey the salvific and hopeful message of the Resurrected Jesus Christ, our Lord, we are looking forward to the talks of the experts.

With love in Christ, from the Holy City of Jerusalem we convey the grace and the blessing of the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb of our Saviour Christ.

THEOPHILOS III

PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

From Secretariat-General

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HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS ADDRESSING THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST USA (NCC)

Luncheon with the Heads of Churches of Jerusalem

Wednesday, September 13, 2017

Opening Remarks

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III

“For when two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mat. 18:20)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Jerusalem Church is ready to welcome you here in our beloved city in the Holy Land. Your presence among us comes “as the dew of Hermon were falling on Jerusalem”, as the Psalmist says (Ps.132 [133] 3).

Your solidarity is highly appreciated, for we’ve been entrusted by the Divine Providence the guardianship and service of the Holy Places. And of course, the protection of the Christian character of Jerusalem on one hand, and on the other hand, the shepherding of our beloved flock. We also join in your hope to be strengthened here today as brothers and

sisters in our resolve to work unceasingly for peace, wishing you great strength as you continue to advocate for such peace upon your return to the United States.

We would like to greet you with the greeting of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, "Peace be with you". Peace to those who are near and those who are far. It is in this spirit that we welcome you.

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS' APPEAL FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE CHRISTIAN RIGHTS IN THE CITY OF JERUSALEM

On Saturday evening, 30th July/12th August, a Press Conference was held with national, regional and international media at the Archdiocese of the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem in Amman.

At this press conference, which was broadcasted live on Jordanian and national TV, on Noursat as well as on the Russian channel RT, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem denounced the recent unjust decision of the Israeli Court, which gave effect to the illegal 2005 hiring contracts of the Jaffa Gate Hotels, belonging to the Patriarchate, contracts which were signed without, due authority and consent, by the then finance department assistant to the deposed Patriarch

Eirinaios, Nikolaos Papademas and the Israeli organization "Ateret Cohanim".

His Beatitude, also strongly rejected the proposed law, introduced by 40 members of the Knesset, which affects all the churches in the Holy Land and would severely restrict the rights of churches to deal freely and independently with their lands and would threaten their confiscation.

The text of the appeal of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem is posted in English in the link below:

<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2017/08/12/34370>

His Beatitude's appeal was followed by answers through Archimandrite Christophoros to the reporters' questions on the manner of management of the Patriarchate's property and the protection of the Christians' rights in the Holy Land as a whole and especially in Jerusalem, the Holy City of the three Monotheistic religions.

From Secretariat-General

PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENT OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS IN AMMAN

Amman – 12 August 2017

Good afternoon.

We thank you all for coming to this press conference.

We are here today to deliver this message from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II, who, according to the Status Quo and international law, is the acknowledged custodian of both Islamic and Christian Holy Sites in Our beloved Holy Land.

Over the past weeks, Our Holy City of Jerusalem has been riding turbulent waves of developments that have thrown Our Patriarchate, along with all the other Churches and Christian communities of the Holy Land, into the rough seas of political tensions and agendas. The latest of which is the well-known decision in the "Jaffa Gate" case, that so crossed the lines of justice and reasonableness.

We have stood silent, bearing patient witness to a harsh campaign against Us and against Our Patriarchate, that seemed to grow in strength daily with false accusations and slander, targeting Our heritage and Our integrity. Today, it is Our call of duty and Our commitment, entrusted to Us by the Lord, that lead Us to break Our silence and say:
Enough is Enough.

We are constrained to take this unprecedented action in calling this press conference to reject publicly and clearly the unfair ruling of the Israeli District Court in the "Jaffa Gate" case. This decade-long legal battle has resulted in an unjust decision which disregarded all of the Patriarchate's clear and concrete legal evidence proving bad faith, bribery and conspiracy. Such a decision, in favour of the Settlor group *Ateret Cohanim*, can only be interpreted as politically motivated.

This bias decision, which affects not only the Patriarchate, but also strikes at the very heart of the Christian Quarter of the Old City, comes at an extremely delicate and sensitive time and will certainly have the most negative effect on the

Christian presence in the Holy Land. It could well lead to escalated tension in our community that we are all working diligently to try and diffuse.

We shall be initiating an appeal process to the High Court of Justice, where we have confidence there will be a decision based purely on matters of law, procedure, and justice. The Patriarchate shall now embark on everything within its power so that this unjust ruling will be overturned.

Our concern about politicisation of the "Jaffa Gate" case is made more acute by the recent action of 40 members of the Knesset, who two weeks ago, signed a proposed bill for debate in the Israeli Parliament that would, if passed, restrict severely the rights of the Churches to deal freely and independently with their lands and would threaten their confiscation.

This bill is a clear attempt to deprive Our 2,000-year-old Patriarchate, as well as Our fellow Churches present for centuries in the Holy Land, of our legitimate and historic freedom and independence. This intolerable bill, if passed, would be a clear violation of every international treaty that has governed the region, and would be an insupportable assault on the freedom of worship.

We are calling for an urgent meeting of the Heads of Churches of the Holy Land,

to co-ordinate our opposition and response to these alarming and serious developments that will affect not only the indigenous Christian community of the Holy Land, but each and every Christian around the world for whom Jerusalem and the Holy Land are of the utmost spiritual significance.

We remain fully committed to upholding Our pastoral and spiritual mission as it has been entrusted to us by Divine Providence. Even as We face these unprecedented and shocking developments, We assure Our beloved Christian

community in Our Holy Land as well as in our region of the Middle East, and abroad, that, as the Patriarchate of the Jerusalem, and the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre, We shall remain true to our mission to be the guardians and the servants of the Holy Tomb of Christ and all the Holy Sites. We shall do all in Our power to uphold the status of the properties of the Patriarchate and our fellow Churches, and We shall be constant in the protection of the Christian presence in our region, against which, both, the judgement in the "Jaffa Gate" case, and, the proposed bill in the Knesset are such grievous assaults.

We cannot stress too highly the extreme seriousness of this situation.

We call upon President Trump, President Putin, King Abdullah II, President Abbas, President Rivlin, Prime Minister Tsipras, President Anastasiades, General Secretary Guterres, President Juncker,

As well as all Our Brethren Heads of Churches in the world and upon the international community,

to intervene to ensure that justice and freedom prevails in these matters.

Justice in this case benefits not just the Christian community here, but all the citizens of the Holy Land; so that all who call the Holy City of Jerusalem and the Holy Land their home may live in freedom and peace.

We pray to God Almighty to strengthen Us and Our brethren in these harsh and difficult times. May God crown our efforts with success, so that justice is done and peace is attained.

Thank you.

ADDRESS OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM AT THE UNITED NATIONS ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS IN NEW YORK

On Tuesday, 5th/18th July 2017, a conference with the title “The Role of Religious Leaders in Peace-building in the Middle East” took place at the Headquarters of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) in New York, with representatives of the United Nations, Islam, Judaism and Christians, as sited on the schedule of this event: UNAOC

His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos , having being invited as the representative of the Christians of the Holy Land and the Middle East, gave the address below:

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

18 July 2017

Mr Secretary General,

Mr. Al-Nasser,

Your Excellency Mr. Dastis,

Rabbi Melchior,

Distinguished Fellow Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a privilege for us to participate in this important gathering on peace-building in the Middle East. As the oldest continuous religious institution in the Holy Land, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem has long been committed to this mission, and we bring the experience of what we call the Greek *symbiosis* – live together in respectful co-existence – to the urgent task of finding new ways to establish and deepen a lasting peace in our region. There has never been a more crucial time for this work, and we applaud both the United Nations and the Alliance of Civilizations for your focus on this.

From our perspective, we would like to take this opportunity to articulate what we believe to be several foundational aspects to enduring peace-building in the Middle East.

The first point we wish to emphasize is in the title of this colloquium. The building of a lasting peace in the Middle East is not simply a matter of political will or expediency. Without a proper understanding of the role of religion and of the responsibility of religious leaders in this process, we shall continue to stumble in our efforts for peace. We cannot pretend that religion is not a factor in the complexity of our life, nor can we ignore the significant role that religious leaders across the board in the Middle East must play if peace is to be given a real chance of emerging from our present extreme difficulties.

To pretend that religion is not important, or to think of the religious aspects of our common life in the Middle East as an inconvenient distraction from what others see as purely a political or diplomatic exercise is naive, and undermining of genuine peace-building at worst. Our region cannot be separated from its religious character. It is a place of

prophets and saints, a meeting place of the human with the divine, and a source of spiritual refreshment for the entire world. All of this transcends states and man-made authorities. We must articulate, and soon, a proper understanding of the central role of religion and religious leaders in helping to create a new future for our region. The title of our meeting today, therefore, captures a truth of which we must not lose sight.

For generations in the Middle East, we have striven to find common ground on which all may stand – or perhaps better put – on which all may live in the full appreciation of our uniqueness as well as our shared heritage.

Once we accept the central importance of religion in the creation of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, so much more falls into place.

We acknowledge our common faith that the Creator is One. However, we articulate our respective theologies, we are together the children of a great monotheistic tradition that is formative of the Abrahamic faiths, and unites different religious groups as this does, and while we have long recognized this phenomenon, we have never lived its fullness with respect to creating a society that completely appreciates its force for good.

From this common belief in the One God flow many other uniting factors. We understand each other's reverence for our Holy Books. We understand each other's commitment to our ancient and living sacred Tradition. We understand each other's formation in a liturgical life. We understand the strands of our life that are shaped by mysticism. We understand the instinct for personal and corporate prayer and piety. We understand the emphasis that we all have on the life of the community as a whole. And we understand the commitment that is deep in our respective traditions for the uniqueness and infinite value of the human person and the duty of service to

our fellow human beings. While the details of our practise may vary, even within our respective groups, we recognise in each other these familiar aspects of our lives. This is of no small importance, and nor is this list complete.

Our understanding of our common humanity is derived from our faith in the One God. Our traditions witness. Our tradition witness the belief that we are created in the image and likeness of God, and the God has invested in each human being infinite worth and inalienable dignity. In our respective traditions, after our faith that God is One, next in importance is our doctrine of the human person. Our traditions share the conviction that each person is capable of an intimate and eternal relationship with God, and that God has created human beings for fruitful, intimate, mutual community, even across our God-given diversity.

For this understanding of our common humanity, which is not first and foremost a political or biological reality, but a fundamental theological truth, derives our commitment to the further truth that we share a common home. In the first instance, the earth is our common home, but with respect to our discussion today we must emphasise that the Middle East is the common home to Jews, Christians, and Muslims, as well as to other religious traditions and communities. Needless to say, this means also that we share a common history and a common culture.

This understanding of the Middle East as our common home is of supreme importance. We are all without distinction – Jew, Christian and Muslim – children of this Holy Land, and without, for a example, a robust and vibrant Christian community in the Middle East, the region would lose its authentic identity. We Christians are not merely inhabitants of the Holy Land. In Jerusalem, for example, which is the spiritual heart, the *intima*, or place of belonging as it is called in Arabic, we have had a special place and role for millennia.

As the heirs of sacred history a physical heritage, our unwavering mission has been to ensure that the Holy Places are open to all people regardless their ethnic, cultural, religious, or national identity. We ardently promote inclusiveness, knowing full well that claims of exclusiveness always produce conflict, and do not do justice to our peace-loving and merciful God.

None of us are guests or intruders; our respective traditions were born in the Middle East, and we are natives of that land. As strange as it may be to have to be clear about this, there are still those who believe otherwise, and who resort to violence to attempt to make the Middle East a mono-cultural or mono-religious group. The Middle East has never been this.

And the last point that we wish to promote flows naturally from these considerations, for we share a common destiny. We share a common destiny with respect to the political, economic, cultural, and religious life of our region. But our Abrahamic traditions also attest that we share a common eternal destiny, a destiny in which Jerusalem, a city that is equally holy to us all, plays a significant spiritual and emotional role. Jerusalem is considered to be the spiritual capital of the whole world; the ceaseless flow of pilgrims who come on a daily basis is ample evidence of this.

As the Holy Land is home to us all, so too is Jerusalem. We many inhabit them, but in a real sense we can never possess them; rather they “possess” us they embrace us in this eternal destiny that demands that we find ways to live in peace, harmony, and mutual respect in this present life. This is what our reality demands of us. *For the Lord makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous* (Mat. 5:45).

When we stop to understand all that we share in common, we grow in respect for each other’s symbols, practises, and daily lives. We begin to perceive each other’s true humanity. In

time, with patience and resolve, we begin to recognise ourselves in each other.

Here are the roots of true dialogue. In the Middle East, dialogue is a way of life. It is not a theory, but a practise. With such dialogue we know that, especially in times of grave difficulty, enemies can become allies, and hatred can be turned into reconciliation.

In this regard, we call to mind one of the most significant events in our shared history; the famous covenant between the caliph Omar ibn Al-Khattab and Patriarch Sophronios, after Oman entered Jerusalem. The soil was fertile for a transformative and fruitful peace. They envisioned a future in which everyone could share in the sacredness and richness of the Holy Land, recognising a common father in Abraham. They were able to stand firm in the integrity of their respective identities and histories, thereby eschewing fear and embracing truth.

There are two approaches to knowing truth and seeing justice; the divine way, which is the ideal; and the human way, which is circumscribed by our shortcomings. Our approach is a pragmatic one, by which common sense and observable reality show the way. For as the Scriptures say, *Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven* (Ps. 85:11).

This is the appropriate climate in which both the activity and the fruits of peace-building will ripen. We know this, because we have seen it before. We are always inspired, first by the prophets and revered personalities of our respective traditions, but also by the great leaders of the world now memorialised by all humanity. From their struggles and sometimes untimely deaths have sprung forth courage, peace, and progress, and they have inspired countless ordinary men and women, who in their local communities, where there has been violence and enmity, have been prepared to take risks for

a new future – a new future of reconciliation.

The reconciliation of which we speak does not mean depriving each other of our national, cultural, or religious identities. We readily admit that reconciliation demands sacrifice, but it does not demand the loss of our uniqueness. This is the path to realistic, mutually respectful co-existence, which is a far more enduring life than mere tolerance.”

From Secretariat-General

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

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