

THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM PARTICIPATES IN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ARAB CHRISTIANS IN AMMAN

Between the 21st to the 22nd of August/3rd to 4th of September 2013, an international conference entitled “The Challenges facing Arab Christians” took place in Amman, Jordan, at the Hotel Royal, upon the initiative of His Majesty, King Abdullah of Jordan, through His Royal Highness, Prince Ghazi.

Discussed at the conference were problems facing Arab Christians in the Middle East areas of Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Jordan and Jerusalem.

Speakers at the Conference were first and foremost the Heads of Churches in the Middle East, and the Leaders of other Christian Churches. A list of the speakers may be read here: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2013/09/03/2989>

Among the Heads of Orthodox Churches, present at the conference were: His Beatitude Ioannis, Patriarch of Antioch, and Our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos. His Beatitude the Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria was represented by the Most Reverend Benedict, Patriarchal Commissioner in Amman and Metropolitan of Philadelphia. His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russians was represented by the Most Reverend Theodosius, Metropolitan of Tambov and Rasskazovo.

His Royal Highness, Prince Ghazi, opened the Conference on Tuesday, the 21st of August/3rd of September, pointing out that Christians have become targets in various countries and that we ought to bear in mind that Arab Christians and Muslims have

lived together as one nation from the time of the Covenant of Umar and together they have fought in the struggles of their homeland. Also, that the democratic legislation of Jordan provides both Arab and Christian citizens with equal rights and that when the Muslims came to Jerusalem, the Christians were already there.

Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, also spoke at the conference, saying how the Middle East is to the Council a unique region to which God was revealed through the prophets, Jesus Christ and the Apostles, therefore there is an urgent need to maintain peace in settling the conflict between the Palestinians and Israel.

After the end of the first session of the conference, participants were received at the Palace by His Majesty, the King of Jordan, Abdullah II. Welcoming his guests, the King noted that at a time when our region suffers from acts of violence, Jordan invites Christians and Muslims from across the world for the sake of peace, religious freedom, justice and prosperity; also for maintaining the identity of Christians and the character of Jerusalem, the Christian and Muslim deference of which Jordan has undertaken the obligation to protect.

During the meeting, the King decorated distinguished personalities participating in the Conference. The King Hussein of Jordan medal (2nd order) was awarded to the Most Reverend Benedict, Patriarchal Commissioner in Amman.

On the evening of the same day, the participants visited the Lord's Baptismal Site on the East Bank of the Jordan river, as well as the Monastery of John the Baptist, founded by the Most Reverend Benedict, who hosted a dinner for them.

During the dinner, His Beatitude Theophilos, Our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, addressed his fellow diners in English. His speech may be read here:

<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2013/09/03/2956>

On Wednesday the 22nd of August/4th of September 2013, during the “Jordan and Jerusalem” Session, the Patriarch of Jerusalem read the following speech in English:

<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2013/09/04/2948>

As regards the challenges facing Arab Christians, all speakers at the Conference pointed out these general points:

That Jordan remains a paragon of a democratic state, securing and guaranteeing the peaceful coexistence of Christians and Muslims, and equal rights for both. That the Conference sends the message of religious freedom and mutual respect for the followers of all religions. That it recognizes and proposes the force of culture and not the culture of force. That Christians and Muslims denounce the use of violence among themselves or in the face of others.

That the Conference makes an appeal for the liberation of the Prelates abducted in Syria. That peace in the Middle East depends on the peaceful settlement of the Jerusalem problem. That schools need to cultivate reconciliation and acceptance between Christians and Muslims. That Arab States ought to encourage their Arab Christian citizens to not abandon their houses and become refugees.

That God cannot be found in power but in justice and truth. That the Church proposes to serve its members and the people. That respect for otherness is a requirement for peace. That the Muslims who came to Jerusalem in 638 AD encountered Christians, they therefore treat them with appropriate respect. That to apologize requires power of the soul, whereas the inability to apologize reveals a weak soul. That Arab Christians ask to live as equal citizens in Arab nations and not as minorities. That the Conference promotes as values the peaceful coexistence of Christians and Muslims, religious tolerance, dignity, reconciliation and equality.

At the conclusion of the Conference, dinner was hosted by the Rum-Orthodox Group, under the presidency of Mr Raouf Abu Jamber, for all participating prelates and laymen.

From the Secretariat-General



H. B. ADDRESS TO THE CONFERENCE “THE CURRENT SITUATION OF CHRISTIANS IN THE MIDDLE EAST”.

Amman, Jordan- 4 September 2013

Your Royal Highness,

Your Beatitudes,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Reverend Fathers,

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We meet together at this conference in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan at a crucial and delicate time in the history of the Holy Land and of the entire Middle East. Each day brings new risks and new opportunities, and there is laid upon our shoulders as the Heads of the Churches and Christian Communities a particular burden of leadership that we cannot

and must not avoid.

We share a common humanity, and we share a common human destiny. The future will unfold with, or without, our cooperation and participation, and it is an imperative of both our religious and our cultural heritage that we are called to play our part in the shaping of our future.

Our focus is on the situation of the Christian Communities of the region, and we wish to emphasize three essential issues in the present crisis.

The first is the reality, which we constantly need to keep to the fore, that the Christian community of the Holy Land and of the Middle East is indigenous to this region and an essential part of the fabric of our society. We are not strangers or exiles here, and the native Christian community extends far beyond the strict confines of what we now designate the Holy Land. Indeed in parts of our region the Christian Church and its institutions are the oldest religious organizations in existence. We have been a continuous witness to the sacred history of this land.

This reality gives us a special mission both in our present challenges and in any future make-up of the society of the Middle East. We have no intention of abandoning our history, our heritage, our fellow countrymen, or eventually our life, let alone the Holy Places of which, by God's Providence, we are the guardians and servants. This is our common home, and we shall continue to live here together.

Our second point concerns the value of genuine co-existence and respect. Whatever else the future brings, it will bring increasing inter-relationships. There will never be a time again when we shall have the possibility of living in our own little ghettos, cut off from those who differ from us either in culture, ethnicity, language, or religion. We shall all have to be able to share several "cultural languages."

But we of all people know this here, for this co-existence and respect is of the essence of this region. Here Jews, Christians, Muslims and others have lived side-by-side, spoken each other's languages, appreciated each other's customs, and shared common human values.

The threat comes to us not from our diversity, which is in fact a blessing to us. The threat comes to us rather from violence and extremism, and from those, from whatever quarter, who seek to overturn our common human values of freedom of religion and worship, freedom of expression, and freedom to live into the fullness of our God-given life and human dignity.

And thirdly we should like to remind everyone of the essential importance of dialogue. The future of the human community cannot be decided by arms, by violence, and by coercion. As His Majesty King Abdullah II said recently during his trip to the Vatican, dialogue is our only option, and we must strive with all our power in any sphere of influence that is open to us to ensure that dialogue, and not war, lies at the heart of the resolution to the difficulties that face us. The forging of our human future here in the Middle East will happen when we engage in the hard work of encountering each other in a dialogue that has about it the same dynamism of reality and purpose that we who are Christians understand to exist in the perichoresis that is at the heart of the mystery of the Incarnation of God.

Our ongoing response, in a word, must be expressed through divine grace and wisdom. We who are religious and spiritual leaders must consider our rightful place alongside governmental and civic authorities both here in our region and around the world to find the solutions that will make for peace, stability, and that rightful coexistence that is at the heart of the strongest societies.

We take this opportunity to express our admiration and support

of His Majesty King Abdullah II, who has given, and continues to give, his strongest efforts for freedom and peace not simply in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, but throughout the Middle East and beyond. As the Custodian of both the Christian and Muslim Holy Places, he has shown exemplary strength of purpose in ensuring the appropriate character of Jerusalem, the Holy Land, and our region, and he has made the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan a living paradigm of co-existence and mutual respect.

Finally we wish to repeat in the clearest possible terms the call to the international community that the Heads of Churches of the Holy Land made in our recent Statement concerning the situation in Egypt, and we need to broaden this concern now to include our neighboring Syria. Both these countries, which have lived the values of tolerance and respect for centuries, are now torn apart by extremism and seemingly uncontrollable factions. Every day innocent blood is being shed as innocent men, women, and children are being killed and terrorized, ancient communities are being obliterated, and precious and irreplaceable shrines and temples are being destroyed. Bishops, priests, monks, and nuns, and religious leaders of other traditions are being brutalized and martyred. Families are being torn apart, and many hundreds of thousands are now displaced.

This is not the way to any kind of future that is acceptable, and with every act of violence reconciliation becomes so much more distant. The international community has a moral role to play with us in this region in helping to end violence and to set the road to reconciliation and stability on a firm foundation. Those who have the peaceful means to make peace must use all such means at their disposal for the good of all. For "blessed are the peace-makers." This would guarantee the stability and well-being of the Middle East and the rest of the world.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

HIS BEATITUDE SPEECH AT THE BAPTISM SITE AT BETHANY.

The Baptism Site at Bethany-beyond-the Jordan, 3 September 2013

Your Excellencies, Your Eminences, Dear Friends,

We gather today at this Holy Site in the aftermath of an important conference organized by His Majesty King Abdullah II on the situation of Christians in the Middle East.

We are living in a delicate time of the history of the Holy Land and of our region. On this occasion we wish to emphasize the crucial importance of the much needed resolution to the conflicts in Syria, the delicate situation in Egypt and not in the least the renewed dialogue and peace process between Israel and Palestine. We know, as His Majesty the King has recently stated, that dialogue is the way to a secure and sustainable peace, and we must all wholehearted support all processes of reconciliation that are underway.

The way of dialogue is always complicated, and it requires of all participants a large measure of patience and sensitivity.

But let us never forget what is at stake. For at stake is the very character of the our beloved Land, as well as the well-being of men, women and children, families and communities, and our rich and irreplaceable heritage.

We who are spiritual leaders and people of faith look to the future with hope, for we trust in the promises and the providence of God. This very Holy Land is a living witness to the God of our sacred history, who has made himself known here in a unique way. We proclaim our God to be the God of peace and reconciliation, and it is in this spirit that we support all efforts by people of good will to establish peace and reconciliation among all.

“Blessed are the peace-makers”, says our Lord. May God bless every good work that is done in the service of humanity.

We welcome you in our humble monastery and may God enlighten all our hearts.

His Beatitude,

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

ETHIOPIAN ARCHBISHOP IN JERUSALEM VISITS PATRIARCHATE

On Friday the 17th/30th of August 2013, the new Archbishop of the Ethiopian Church in Jerusalem, Mr Daniel Ilma, visited the Patriarchate upon assuming office after the election of his predecessor, Archbishop Aba Mattias, as Patriarch of Ethiopia.

The new Ethiopian Archbishop was received by His Beatitude Theophilos, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, in the presence of Fathers of the Holy Sepulcher.

During the Archbishop's visit, a discussion took place on the ancient ties between the Ethiopian and Greek peoples since the years before Christ, and on the generally harmonious relation that links the Ethiopian Church and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Among further topics discussed were the peaceful coexistence between Ethiopians and Greeks in the area of the Church of the Resurrection and the Monastery of Abraham, and the willingness and ability of our Patriarchate to help the Ethiopians resolve certain problems troubling them in their Monastery, known as Dabre Seltan, situated on the roof of the Church of the Resurrection.

In the context of the meeting, His Beatitude offered the Ethiopian Archbishop an ivory engolpion (icon worn on the chest) and cross, and the "History of the Church of Jerusalem" by Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, wishing him a peaceful and fruitful tenure as Archbishop.

From the Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/XjSReAj20jc>



**INAUGURATION OF "SPIRITUAL
CENTER" AT BETHLEHEM**

PILGRIMAGE SITE

On Tuesday the 16th/29th of August 2013, the Spiritual Center of the Bethlehem Pilgrimage was officially inaugurated.

The Center is set up at a residence near the Basilica of the Nativity, and the Central Monastery of the Greek Orthodox located within. The residence was purchased and renovated by the Patriarchal Commissioner in Bethlehem, His Eminence Theophylaktos, Archbishop of Jordan.

The Center is intended to include various teaching and educational departments for the youth of the Arab-speaking congregation in Bethlehem (Rum Orthodox), i.e. courses on the History of the Holy Land, the Church of Jerusalem, the Holy Sites, Byzantine Music, computer literacy, foreign languages etc.

By means of these courses and other events to be hosted at the Center, young people will have the opportunity to meet and communicate with one another, overcoming isolation and alienation caused by the unstable political situation and financial adversities facing both Bethlehem and its environs.

The administration of the Center shall be undertaken by His Eminence Theophylaktos, Archbishop of Jordan, alongside selected associates from the Bethlehem congregation, i.e. theologian Mr Jandala Masri, and Mr Georgios Kharan with the blessing, approval and guidance of His Beatitude Theophilos and of the Holy and Sacred Synod.

The inauguration ceremony was preceded by a meeting of the heads of the three Communities – Greek Orthodox, Franciscan and Armenian – at the Bethlehem office of the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr Mahmoud Abbas – Abu Mazen, with his representatives, focused on working together on the manner in which officials and pilgrims will be received at the Basilica

of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

Subsequently, the Patriarchal Commissioner in Bethlehem, Theophylaktos, hosted lunch for His Beatitude and retinue, as well as for high-ranked officials of the Palestinian Authority, Sheiks of the region, Mr George Bassus and to approximately two hundred members of our congregation in Bethlehem and other communities.

Lunch was followed by the Center's opening ceremony and the blessing of the water by His Beatitude.

On this very significant event for the life of our Greek Orthodox Community and all towns in Bethlehem, His Beatitude made a speech in Arabic which may be read here <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2013/08/28/2662> wishing success of the Center's objectives for the benefit of those partaking in its activities.

At the conclusion of His speech, His Beatitude was given a letter by the Judicial Assembly of the Palestinian Authority addressed to President Abu Mazen, wherein His Beatitude is praised for His cooperation towards peace, inter-religious coexistence and contribution to the Palestinian people. The letter, in Arabic, may be read here: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2013/08/28/2665>

Upon leaving the Center, His Beatitude consecrated the Chapel of the Holy Innocents near the Basilica, recently renovated by Theophylaktos, Archbishop of Jordan.

From the Secretariat-General



HEAD OF CHRISTIAN AFFAIRS AT AMERICAN CONSULATE IN JERUSALEM VISITS PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday the 31st of July/13th of August 2013, Mr Ryan Purnell, head of the Committee on Christian Affairs of the American Consulate in Jerusalem visited the Patriarchate upon assuming office.

The American Consular officer was received by His Beatitude Theophilos, Our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem. At the meeting, Mr Purnell was congratulated on his new duties and informed on pilgrimage and asset affairs of the Patriarchate as well as on the situation of Christians in the Middle East, with an eye to a collaboration which promotes and safeguards the rights of each Community in Jerusalem and the rest of the Holy Land.

Mr Ryan Purnell thanked His Beatitude and pledged himself to a very good and fruitful cooperation.

From the Secretariat-General

NEW GREEK CONSUL GENERAL IN JERUSALEM VISITS PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday the 31st of July/13th of August 2013, the new Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr Georgios Zacharoudiakis,

visited the Patriarchate upon assuming office.

The Greek Consul General was received by His Beatitude Theophilos, Our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, in the presence of Brothers of the Holy Sepulcher.

In the context of this meeting, His Beatitude wished the Consul General strength in his new duties and informed him on principal matters of the Patriarchate, whilst requesting his cooperation and support in his capacity as a representative of Greece, successor to the Byzantine Empire and protector of the Holy Lands.

To such cooperation the Consul General pledged himself unreservedly.

From the Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/QtnqxIsPZh0>



GROUP FROM JORDAN CONGREGATION PATRIARCHATE VISITS

On Thursday the 26th of July/8th of August 2013, a group of thirty members of the Arab-speaking (Rum Orthodox) congregation of the Patriarchate from various regions of Jordan visited the Patriarchate. The group was headed by Hieromonk f. Athanasios Kakis.

This pious group was received by His Holiness Theophilos, Our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, in the presence of Brothers of the Holy Sepulcher. At the meeting, the Patriarch offered fatherly advice and blessed the group's tour around the All-Holy Pilgrimage Sites.

From the Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/T88oFdhBKBQ>



FEAST OF PROPHET ELIJAH THE THESBITE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

The feast of Prophet Elijah the Thesbite, celebrated on the 20th of July each year, was honoured by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem on Saturday the 21st of July/3rd of August 2013, due to pastoral reasons. The celebration took place at the Prophet's Holy Monastery which lies next to the main road leading from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, in the proximity of the ruins of the ancient Monastery of the Seat of Theotokos.

On this site stands the Monastery since very ancient times, set on the tradition that, having escaped the anger of kings Ahab and Jezebel, the Prophet Elijah sought refuge in this area. First he brought down fire from God and heaven and burnt the altar on Mount Carmel and then he slept under a juniper tree until awoken by an angel of the Lord, telling him: *"Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you"*. So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled

forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. (1 Kings 19 4-9)

In the church of this Monastery, renovated by the late Arkadios, Metropolitan of Askalon, who hailed from Cyprus, a vespers was held in the evening, the Most Reverend Theophylaktos, Archbishop of Jordan and Patriarchal Commissioner in Bethlehem, officiating.

In the morning of the aforementioned day a panegyric divine Liturgy was held, led by His Beatitude Theophilos, Our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, in the presence of co-officiating Prelates. The Liturgy was attended by a pious Greek-speaking, Arab-speaking and Russian-speaking congregation.

During the *Koinonikon* of the mass, His Beatitude Theophilos, Our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem proclaimed God's Word, which in Arab may be found here:
<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2013/08/02/2609>

At the end of the Liturgy, a reception was held at the Hegoumen's quarters, followed by lunch offered by Hieromonk Paisios, head of renovation works at the Monastery.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/yAkGMRDEYMI>



SEVENTH DAY OF CELEBRATIONS IN RUSSIA – JOINT SERVICE IN KIEV

On Sunday the 15th/28th of July 2013, a Joint Patriarchal, Primatial and Hieratic Service was held in the Square of the Kiev Caves Cathedrals of Lavra.

The exquisite Church of Lavra is dedicated to the Dormition of Theotokos. Its first founder was St Antony of Kiev, approximately in 1095. He was ordained monk in Mount Athos.

In these very deep and very large labyrinthine caverns, either carved or constructed, thousands of monks have lived in austere asceticism from the 11th century onwards. Holy relics are kept in the caves, some exuding myrrh and some imperishable, declaring the power of the grace of our Lord, the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ, as well as the sanctification of the body and its participation in theosis by grace.

The relics of several Russian saints are kept here, in the Cavern of Upper Lavra. The Cavern also includes many small chapels, such as those of St Theodosios, second founder of Lavra, and a chapel with 13th century mosaic icons on the iconostasis.

In the second Cave, known as the Near Caves, the holy relics of seventy three saints are kept. The Cave contains the chapels of St Theodosios, 12th century St Varlaam, hegoumen of Pecherskiy, the 13th century chapel of St Antony's Tonsured Monks, and the altar wherein the holy relics are kept.

On the walls of the caverns, small curved conches, closed,

attest to being openings of tombs of many unknown saints. The guide also pointed to a grave wherein are kept the bones of twelve architects who died in Lavra and were buried in its cemetery.

This work of architects is appreciated even more if one considers that the whole area of the Caves includes twenty-four ground Churches and six underground.

At the end of this holy and magnificent Pan-Orthodox Joint Service, His Beatitude Theophilos, Our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, delivered an address on behalf of all Orthodox Churches. The English version of the address may be found here: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2013/07/28/2713>

After the divine Liturgy, an official lunch was held by Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All-Ukraine for all Prelates and Delegates of Local Orthodox Churches.

Subsequently, the Prelates and Delegates left from Kiev central train station at about 15:50, to arrive in Minsk, Belarus at 23:35 pm.

From the Secretariat-General

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