



## PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF LOCAL CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM

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***“What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God?” – Micah 6:8***

Two years ago, we, the heads of the Churches of Jerusalem, issued a statement of deep concern about breaches of the Status Quo that governs the Holy Sites and the rights and privileges of the Churches. Violations attempted to restrict the ability of the Churches to deal freely with our properties; including the underhanded dealings of radical groups one of which succeeded in being awarded the District Court of Jerusalem ruling in favour of them seeking to seize properties belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church in the heart of the Christian Quarter in and around Jaffa Gate.

Following the 3 June session at the High Court of Appeal hearing the Orthodox Patriarchate’s appeal of that decision, a judgment was given on 10 June in favour of the radical group. We are extremely surprised by the speed with which the court delivered its judgment.

The actions of this radical group do not just mean an assault on the property rights of the Greek Orthodox Church, but an assault on the Status Quo protections for all Christians in this holy city of Jerusalem and deeply threatens the Christian presence in our beloved Holy Land. If the radical group now manages to evict the protected tenants and take over those properties, Christians and pilgrims would lose their main access into the Christian Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem and more crucially the main access to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The Council of Patriarchs and Heads of Churches of Jerusalem supported the Orthodox Patriarchate in its determination to appeal the original District Court decision and continue in our full-throated support after the new judgment. An attempt to undermine the presence of one Church here undermines all the Churches, and the wider Christian community around the world. We reaffirm our belief that a vibrant Christian community in Jerusalem is an essential element in the preservation of Jerusalem’s historically diverse society, and a prerequisite for peace in this city; Jerusalem must maintain its multi-cultural and multi-religious mosaic character, being home to the three Monotheistic religions.

We call upon Prime Minister Netanyahu and the Israeli Government, President Rivlin, world leaders and all people of good will around the world to join with us in pursuing an outcome in this case that maintains the Status Quo, preserves the secure presence of the Christian community of Jerusalem, and rejects the use of underhand and illegal methods to seize its properties.

### **Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem**

- +Patriarch Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate
- +Patriarch Nourhan Manougian, Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Patriarchate
- +Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Apostolic Administrator, Latin Patriarchate
- +Fr. Francesco Patton, ofm, Custos of the Holy Land
- +Archbishop Anba Antonious, Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, Jerusalem
- +Archbishop Gabriel Daho, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate
- +Archbishop Aba Embakob, Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate
- +Archbishop Yaser AL-Ayash, Greek-Melkite-Catholic Patriarchate
- +Archbishop Mosa El-Hage, Maronite Patriarchal Exarchate
- +Archbishop Suheil Dawani, Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East
- +Bishop Ibrahim Sani Azar, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land
- +Bishop Pierre Malki, Syrian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate
- +Most Rev. Krikor-Okosdinos Coussa, Armenian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate