



Arab Orthodox Union Club of Jerusalem Calls for Protection of Religious Freedom in Occupied Jerusalem

6 May 2024

Christians in Jerusalem were denied free and unimpeded access to the Holy Fire Saturday celebrations in occupied Jerusalem. Checkpoints were placed on the roads leading to the Holy Sepulchre Church, the Orthodox Patriarchate, and the Christian Quarter. Oftentimes the checkpoints were placed one after the other, only within a few meters apart. Members of the Border Police, Police, and this time the Israeli Army for the first time, were particularly violent with the worshippers who tried to access the Holy Sepulchre Church and its vicinity. Christians were beaten up, pushed aggressively, shouted at, and there was a deliberate effort to deny them access. Such violations have been going on since 2005 but is getting harder for the last couple of years during Holy Fire Saturday.

The Israeli occupation authorities acted in violation of Jerusalem's legal and historical status quo, which guarantees unimpeded access to holy site, safety and peaceful access by worshippers; and organizes the processions, arrangements, and use of space during Holy Fire Saturday. The Status Quo is important for maintaining peace and order during religious celebrations, and violations lead to tension and confrontation.

The Arab Orthodox Union Club of Jerusalem call for the protection of Jerusalem's legal and historical status quo. Help is needed, through pressure on the occupying authority, namely the Government of Israel, to respect the existing arrangement in occupied Jerusalem and to refrain from action that impedes free access to holy site and the exercise of religious rituals. Help is needed to protect Jerusalem as a city holy to the three monotheistic religions, and to protect Christian rights during Holy Fire Saturday and on all occasions. This is the same call made repeatedly by the Patriarchs and heads of Jerusalem churches. They have been altering to violations of religious freedom in Jerusalem. We support their call, and we insist that Christians must be given free, unimpeded access to holy sites and be given respect and dignity.

On behalf of the Board the Arab Orthodox
Union Club of Jerusalem

Hani Boullata
Chairman of the Board

