


The Higher Presidential Committee for Church Affairs Reaffirms Support to Church Leaders Rejecting and Confronting Israel's Tax Imposition on Churches and their Property in Palestine

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The Higher Presidential Committee for Church Affairs in Palestine strongly denounced recent Israeli attacks on Churches, primarily the Jerusalem “municipality’s” decision to collect Church taxes. This is a very egregious and dangerous violation of the status quo that has governed the status of Christian churches in Palestine for centuries. Palestinian holy places and institutions have existed long before the creation of the state of Israel.

In a statement issued by member of the PLO Executive Committee and Head of the Higher Presidential Committee for Church Affairs in Palestine, Dr. Ramzi Khouri, the committee reaffirmed the principled and courageous position of Church leaders in rejecting and confronting these illegal measures. Such measures deliberately target the Churches, their communities, institutions, and property as a way of maintaining exclusivity and Jewish control. This is part of the further escalation in Israel's policies

to isolate Jerusalem by a cruel military occupation. Clearly, these dangerous developments are the outcome of Israel's official policies that blatantly discriminate against both Christian and Muslim Palestinians.

Palestinian Christian and Muslim holy sites have been the target of Israeli occupation measures that seek to distort and negate the culture, history and sanctity of these sites, while simultaneously attempting to eradicate the Palestinian identity and presence from occupied Jerusalem. Jerusalem cannot and must not be subject to exclusive possession.

This exposes the false claims of Israel that it respects freedom of worship for all religions. Since its occupation of the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza in 1967, Israel has systematically prevented Palestinians (Christians and Muslims) from reaching their holy sites of worship in Jerusalem and accessing basic services such as health and education in the occupied city.

In addition, these places of worship and institutions have been targeted repeatedly by Jewish-Israeli fundamentalists and extremists without the Israeli authorities providing any form of protection for the victims or accountability for the perpetrators.

The Committee calls upon the global community and people of conscience to hold Israel accountable for its belligerent occupation and for the grave injustices committed against the Palestinian people. Such expressions of religious intolerance, bigotry and institutionalized discrimination must be brought to an end.