

The Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Greek Deputy Foreign Minister address key challenges in the Holy Land



Jerusalem, December 10, 2024

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem welcomed a diplomatic visit yesterday as His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, received the Greek Deputy Foreign Minister, Her Excellency Alexandra Papadopoulou. The meeting, held at the Patriarchate's headquarters in the Old City of Jerusalem, was marked by His Beatitude's heartfelt prayers for an end to the ongoing war, particularly for the victims in Gaza. He expressed deep concern for the more than two million civilians in Gaza, especially the children, who endure a heartbreaking reality of loss and suffering. The meeting also underscored the strong ties between the Patriarchate and Greece, highlighting their shared commitment to safeguarding the Christian presence in the Holy Land.

Accompanied by His Excellency Kiriakos Loukakis, the Greek Ambassador to Israel,

the Consul of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr. Dimitrios Angelosopoulos, and members of her delegation, Mrs Papadopoulou engaged in a series of discussions with Patriarch Theophilos III and members of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre. His Beatitude described the visit as “a strong message in many directions,” emphasizing its significance, particularly in light of the escalating threats to the status quo of the Holy Places and the mounting challenges confronting the Christian community in the Holy Land.

During the meeting, Patriarch Theophilos outlined critical concerns, including issues related to visa restrictions for clergy and students, particularly the Israeli refusal of visas for children under the age of 15 attending the Patriarchate’s Seminary school on Mount Zion. He also raised concerns about unauthorized construction activities near the Lavra of Saint Sabas and the ongoing difficulties in securing ID cards for Brotherhood members residing in the country for decades.

In an appeal for support, His Beatitude presented Mrs Papadopoulou with a letter urging the Greek government to assist in addressing these matters. He also sought Greece’s collaboration in advancing restoration efforts at the historic Monastery of the Holy Cross, emphasizing its cultural and spiritual significance.

The exchange of gifts between H.B. Patriarch Theophilos III and H.E. Mrs. Papadopoulou symbolized the deep mutual respect between the Patriarchate and Greece. His Beatitude presented her with an icon of the Theotokos, while she offered a ceremonial disk to commemorate the visit.

The meeting underscored the Patriarchate’s enduring mission. As Patriarch Theophilos remarked, “In unity, we stand as stewards of the sacred, ensuring that the light of Christ continues to shine in this land of His earthly ministry.” His words resonated with the spirit of cooperation that defined the day’s events, reaffirming the shared dedication to preserving the Christian heritage of Jerusalem.

Following their discussions, Mrs. Papadopoulou visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. She was greeted by His Eminence Bishop Isidoros, the Sacristan of the Church, who guided her on a pilgrimage to the Holy Tomb and Calvary. The visit served as a poignant reminder of the Patriarchate’s pivotal role in preserving the sacred landmarks of Christianity.





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