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Heads of Churches in Jerusalem meet Diplomatic Missions regarding challenges facing christians in the Holy Land



Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, led by His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, met on Friday, 14 February, with a delegation of several Consul Generals and Heads of Missions in Jerusalem and to the Palestinian Authority, as well as representatives of the Quartet and UNSCO, at the headquarters of the Jerusalem Patriarchate.

The various churches' representatives included His Paternity Francisco Patton, Custodian of the Holy Land; Archbishop Hosam Naoum of the Episcopal Archdiocese, Representatives of the Armenian Patriarchate, Coptic Patriarchate, and Ethiopian Patriarchate.

The briefing, which is held annually in an effort to bring together faith and prosperity, aimed to focus on the impact of the war in Gaza and the region on the local Christian communities, and the rising hostilities and challenges facing them in the Holy Land.

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III opened the meeting by calling for the need to “bolster, support, and maintain the current ceasefire, and.. collectively commit ourselves to rebuild our places of worship and ministries so that an enduring peace can take root.” He also expressed the importance of diplomatic collaboration with the churches in a mutual effort to maintain the multi religious, multi ethnic, and multi cultural character of the Holy Land.

The meeting gave the opportunity to conduct a Q&As session, where both sides had the chance to express their thoughts, fears, challenges and hopes for the future. The Heads of Churches highlighted the immense pressure facing the churches and their institutions, ranging from escalating violence, economic hardship and the enforcement of Arnona (taxation), and restrictions on worship and increasing hate crimes targeting clergymen, holy sites, and in some cases, pilgrims.

Towards the end of the meeting, the attendees concluded for a call for to uphold the Status Quo, help protect the Armenian Quarter, and continue to support Christians of the Holy Land and Jerusalem, especially in the Old City; calling for a lasting peace to enable the comeback of pilgrimage and life to the Holy Land, especially that Easter is approaching. They also touched on the importance of assistance to be given to the Churches to support the rebuilding efforts in Gaza and communities throughout the West Bank and Jerusalem. Furthermore, it was highlighted the crucial need for Churches as they play a monumental role in creating a sustainable peace for both sides affected in the conflict, which can move forward with economic support for the various Church institutions,including holy sites, hospitals, schools and other ministries.

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