

## **H.B. Theophilos III and President Erdoğan Reaffirm Status Quo as Pillars of Jerusalem's Sacred Heritage**



Istanbul, 13 September 2025

His Beatitude Theophilos III, Patriarch of Jerusalem, was received today in Istanbul by His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Türkiye, in a fraternal encounter that highlighted the historic and spiritual ties between the Holy Land and Türkiye.

During the meeting, Patriarch Theophilos recalled the enduring legacy of the Covenant of Omar, established in the seventh century between Patriarch Sophronios of Jerusalem and Caliph Omar ibn al-Khattab, which laid the foundation for the protection of Christian holy sites and institutions in the region. He noted that this covenant, later developed under the Ottomans into the Status Quo arrangement, continues to safeguard the mosaic character of Jerusalem and the coexistence of its diverse religious communities.

His Beatitude emphasized that the patrimony of the Church institutions must be preserved everywhere as a living witness of history and faith, and expressed deep appreciation for President Erdoğan's recognition of the importance of this patrimony in Türkiye. He underlined that Muslim leaders, as heirs of the Covenant of Omar, share in the safeguarding of Christian communities and holy places, a duty spearheaded by the Hashemites as Custodians of the Christian and Muslim holy sites in the Holy Land.

Quoting the words of the Apostle Paul, His Beatitude recalled that "if it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18). He stressed that this spirit of peace must guide the defense of the historic Status Quo, which safeguards Jerusalem's sacred heritage and preserves the city's unique mosaic of faiths. He affirmed that renewed cooperation is essential to ensure that the holy places, and the patrimony of the Church, remain a living source of unity and hope for all peoples of the region.

