26/11/2025

The visit of the Greek Minister of Education Mrs Zacharaki at the Patriarchate



With exceptional splendour, the visit of Her Excellency the Minister of Education, Religious Affairs, and Sports of the Hellenic Republic, Mrs Sophia Zacharaki, to the Ancient Patriarchate of Jerusalem was carried out. Her presence on the historic twentieth anniversary of the God-guided Enthronement of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III, once again confirmed the unwavering support of the Hellenic State for the Patriarchate, for the venerable person of the Primate, and for His manifold work in education, culture, and society.

Representing the Hellenic Republic, Her Excellency attended the Official Doxology, celebrated on Saturday, 9/22 November of the current year, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and subsequently proceeded to the Patriarchal Reception Hall, where she delivered an address. She was also present at the inauguration of the new Patriarchal Museum and at the official luncheon.

In the evening, she venerated the Holy Sepulchre. She toured the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, accompanied by its Hegumen and Sacristan, His Eminence

Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, receiving detailed information concerning the historical and spiritual significance of the Church. At the same time, she reaffirmed the Hellenic State's commitment to the maintenance and restoration of the iconostasis, a work of supreme artistic value and the highest spiritual importance.

An official dinner followed, hosted by His Beatitude, attended by members of the Holy Sepulchre Fathers, the Patriarchal Commissioner, His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolias, the Elder Chief Secretary, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod, the Reverend Archimandrite Christodoulos, and the Archdeacon Mark. The meeting was conducted in a spirit of profound respect and constructive dialogue, where the prospects for strengthening Greek schools, preserving the Greek language in a multicultural environment, and protecting the ecclesiastical and cultural heritage of the Holy Places were discussed. His Beatitude remarked: "The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, as the living custodian of History and Memory, has supported Hellenism through the centuries. Education constitutes the firmest foundation of this presence. Following your visit, it is confirmed that Greece remains close to us, truly and practically, both in the Christian flock and in the preservation and safeguarding of the current status quo of Jerusalem." Her Excellency responded: "The honour of being present in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem is accompanied by profound responsibility. The Hellenic State recognises your invaluable work in education, culture, and the protection of the Holy Sites. Our priority is the coordinated support of your schools and educational centres, so that the Greek language and tradition may continue to illuminate the Holy Land."

On the following day, Her Excellency visited Bethlehem, where she participated in the Divine Liturgy in the Basilica of the Nativity and was guided by the Patriarchal Commissioner in Bethlehem, His Eminence Metropolitan Benedictos of Diocaesarea. She once again noted that the forthcoming renovation works in the Nativity Grotto will internationally highlight cooperation and peaceful coexistence in a region tested daily. To this end, the Hellenic Government, through the Patriarchate, will provide financial assistance for the maintenance and restoration of the God-bearing Nativity Grotto.

Visiting the Patriarchal School of Zion, she was received by the Principal, Monk Basil. She conversed with teachers and students, expressing her emotion and honour for the accomplished educational work.

A special moment was her visit to the Monastery of the Precious Cross near the Parliament, where, according to sacred tradition, the wood from which the Precious Cross originated was planted. There, she was welcomed by the Hegumen of the

Monastery and Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod, Archimandrite Christodoulos, who informed her of the extensive restoration work undertaken by the Patriarchate, transforming the Monastery into a significant centre of culture, history, and theological memory of international influence.

At the luncheon that followed, Her Excellency, as an expert on matters of her Ministry, emphasised the need for closer cooperation between the Patriarchate and the State for the re-establishment of the Historic School of the Precious Cross as a tertiary centre of studies and a multifaceted spiritual hub.

Her Excellency’s visit was marked by dignity, clarity of expression, sincere willingness to cooperate, and genuine concern for education and the spiritual life of the Holy Places. It revealed the ethos and institutional gravity of the Hellenic State.

Her presence reaffirmed that Greece remains steadfastly close to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, as a practical supporter of the preservation of the status quo of the Holy Sites and of the multicultural character of the Holy City of Jerusalem.

The visit concluded in a climate of gratitude and constructive outlook. His Beatitude expressed his sincere thanks to the Hellenic State and to Her Excellency the Minister for their steadfast care for Greek Orthodox education and the flock in the Holy Places, care which constitutes an investment in the continuity and resilience of this presence in the heart of the Holy Land, a place of encounter for faith, culture, and world memory.

From the Secretariat-General

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