25/05/2020

# Jerusalem’s Holy Sepulchre fails to reopen Sunday as planned

Religious officials said that reopening was postponed but did not give a new date

JERUSALEM: Two months after it was closed as part of anti-coronavirus precautions, Jerusalem’s Church of the Holy Sepulchre remained closed to the public on Sunday, despite an earlier official announcement of its reopening.

Located in the walled Old City of Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem, most Christians believe the site is where Jesus was crucified and entombed.

Millions of pilgrims visit the church each year, but it was closed on March 25, ahead of the Easter holidays, as part of measures imposed to combat the spread of the COVID-19 disease in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΤΟΥ ΤΥΦΛΟΥ ΣΤΟΝ ΠΑΝΙΕΡΟ ΝΑΟ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΕΩΣ

Geplaatst door Jerusalem-Patriarchate op Zaterdag 23 mei 2020

Leaders of the three denominations that share the site had said in a joint statement on Saturday that it would reopen on May 24 “to the faithful for visits and prayers.”
The Greek Orthodox, Armenian and Roman Catholic denominations share custody of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.
They said that entry would be restricted to a maximum of 50 people at a time, “to those who have no fever or symptoms of infection and are wearing suitable face coverings.”
But on Sunday morning worshippers were denied entry, to the disappointment of several seen by AFP journalists at the scene.
Religious officials said that reopening was postponed but did not give a new date, hinting that there were difficulties in counting numbers in order to maintain social distancing.
One official told AFP that 50 clerics from various churches had came to pray, leaving no room for the public.
Another official said it had been deemed preferable to wait for a further easing of Israeli restrictions so that 100 people could enter at a time.
More than 16,600 cases of the COVID-19 disease have been recorded in Israel, including 279 deaths.
In the occupied West Bank, Palestinian authorities have reported 368 cases and two deaths from the virus.
Israel has begun to loosen lockdown measures, saying infection rates were slowing.
Religious sites were authorized to reopen on Wednesday on the condition that entry be limited to 50 people at a time.
Access to the Western Wall, the holiest site at which Jews are permitted to pray, had been severely restricted, but it reopened more widely to worshippers in early May.
The Al-Aqsa mosque — Islam’s third holiest site — will reopen after Eid Al-Fitr, the festival marking the end of holy fasting month of Ramadan on Sunday, the site’s governing body announced Tuesday.

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