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Patriarchate of Jerusalem decries illegal seizure of property in Holy City by extremist settlers' group



The Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Most Divine Beatitude Theophilos III, this week demanded that members of the extremist settlers' group Ateret Cohanim abandoned their illegal seizure of the Patriarchate-owned Little Petra Hotel, in the Christian Quarter of Jerusalem.

The Heads of Churches in the Holy City have repeatedly warned of the illegitimate actions by extremists, who have followed a pattern of intimidation, violence, and lawless action.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem had stressed that it has engaged in good faith negotiations with the Israeli government to settle the status of these Christian heritage properties that are located on the Christian pilgrim route, and through a committee headed by Minister Elazer Stern.

In a statement, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate notes: "…We were assured that there would be no changes to the facts on the ground in the Christian Quarter while these negotiations are ongoing. The actions of Ateret Cohanim this week violate that assurance. In occupying the Greek Orthodox Church's property… Ateret

Cohanim has committed criminal acts of break-in and trespass.”

In Athens, the Greek ministry of foreign affairs also issued a related statement, stressing that it is closely following the developments regarding the illegal intrusion into the Little Petra Hotel, while adding “…We express our particular concern over this development. In connection with this issue, Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikos Dendias contacted his Israeli counterpart, Yair Lapid, from whom he requested that the issue be resolved as soon as possible.”

In another development related to Israel, the Greek ministry strongly condemned late Tuesday’s terrorist attack in Bnei Brak, east of Tel Aviv, in which a Palestinian gunman killed at least five people before being fatally shot by police.

In a Tweet, the Greek ministry underlined that “… Such acts do not have any place in our societies. Our condolences to the victims’ families and support to the people & government of our friend and partner Israel.”