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STATEMENT BY THE ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM FOR EASTER 2022



The Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem congratulates its congregations and all the people of the Holy Land on both sides of the Jordan River for the occasion of Easter and Saturday of the Holy Light, and at the same time we affirm our strong and renewed commitment to our natural right to celebrate our holidays along with our communities, families and to participate together in prayers at our churches in the Old City of Jerusalem, including the basic right of all our communities to access the Church of Holy Sepulchre and its vicinity during Easter festivities including Holy Light Saturday. Our communities have been exercising this divine right freely throughout the ages and different rulers, regardless of the circumstances that the Holy City went through in history.

For many years, participating in prayers and even having access to churches in the Old City, especially during Easter holidays, has become very difficult for our congregations and our people in general, due to police unilaterally enforced restrictions and its violence against believers who insist on exercising their natural

divine right to worship. Previously, we had cooperated with different Christian bodies and leaders to bring our case to the international, domestic and judicial levels, and we also coordinated with the police themselves, with the aim of preventing the police from continuing their unacceptable practices, but unfortunately the promises were great and what actually took place on the ground was not even remotely close to those promises.

Instead of reversing its habitual unacceptable practices on Easter and Holy Fire Saturday, the police have recently informed the Patriarchate of additional new unilateral measures that increase restrictions on Holy Fire Saturday, to the effect that the police will only allow one thousand people to enter the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on this great day, although it is customary to many thousands of worshippers to enter the church in celebration on that day. Furthermore, the police said that they will allow only five hundred people to enter the Old City and reach the Patriarchate yards and the overlooking roof of the Holy Sepulchre Church. The Patriarchate believes that there is no justification for these additional unjust restrictions, and affirms its explicit, clear and complete rejection of all restrictions. The Patriarchate is fed up with police restrictions on freedom to worship and with its unacceptable methods of dealing with the God given rights of Christians to practice rituals and have to access their holy sites in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Accordingly, the orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem has decided, by the power of the Lord, that it will not compromise its right to provide spiritual services in all churches and squares. It also announces that prayers will be held as usual by the Patriarchate and its priests, hoping that believers are able to participate. This position of the Patriarchate stems from the basis of divine right, heritage and history. The police must stop imposing restrictions and violence that, unfortunately, have become part of our sacred ceremonies. We also urge our congregations to uphold our historical heritage through participating in the rituals and celebrations of Easter and Holy Fire Saturday this year in the Church of Holy Sepulchre and its vicinity.

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