

Patriarch Theophilos III Speaks at the Annual International Religious Freedom Summit in Washington DC



His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III attended this morning, Monday January 30, the opening session for the annual International Religious Freedom Summit (IRF) held in Washington DC, United States.

After greeting the attendance with the peace of Jerusalem, His Beatitude took the opportunity to relay the current circumstances of Christians of the Holy Land and Jerusalem to the audience. Pointing out that the “peaceful mosaic that we have known for hundreds of years is under threat” explaining that for years now “the Christian community has faced hate crimes and acts of vandalism” that are no longer targeting properties alone but carrying subtle messages with every attack, that being “that Christians are not welcome in Jerusalem”. In addition, Patriarch Theophilos III underlined that those attacks are intensifying and targeting the Christian pilgrim route at Jaffa Gate, New Gate, as well as the Mountain of Olives, which will impact the Garden of Gethsemane.

Being a main speaker at this summit, representing his fellow Church leaders as well as the faithful communities of the Holy Land, His Beatitude utilized the joint statement published yesterday by the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem regarding the increasing cycle of violence in the Holy Land, “we have been constantly warning of an exploding, senseless cycle of violence that will only cause hurt and suffering to everyone. Such a state of affairs will almost certainly bring further atrocities and anguish, driving us away from the much sought-after peace and stability that we all seek.”

Towards the end of his speech, His Beatitude called on Members of the Congress and leaders of American civil society to support the Christian existence in the Holy Land to thrive alongside other communities, highlighting that although “we are small in number but large in mission” and to ensure that the upcoming generations would be able to visit the Holy City and walk in the footsteps of the Prophets and Christ, and be welcomed not only by stones “but by a vibrant Christian presence.”

The IRF summit of 2023 is going to be held for three days in Washington D.C., starting January 31st and ending on February 1st.

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