

THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM CALLS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION OF HOLY SITES



The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, represented by His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, along the Holy Synod and the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre, the clergy and the faithful, condemn the heinous terrorist attack that took place this morning during the Sunday service, at the hands of two Israeli radicals, which targeted the Church of Gethsemane in Jerusalem, where the Tomb of the Virgin Mary lies. The Patriarchate also denounces the attempt to cause physical harm to Archbishop Joachim, who was leading the service, as well as the attack on one of the priests in the church.

The Patriarchate deplores this atrocious crime, which came at the time of Lent preparations for the Easter celebrations and its traditional rituals, especially Holy Light Saturday, which has become a marker of seasonal suffering for Christians as a result of physical restrictions imposed by the authorities to prevent them from reaching the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to exercise their God-given right to worship.

The Patriarchate also emphasises that terrorist attacks, by radical Israeli groups, targeting churches, cemeteries, and Christian properties, in addition to physical and verbal abuse against Christian clergy, have become almost a daily occurrence that evidently increases in intensity during Christian holidays. This dismal situation hasn't drawn any appropriate reaction, locally or internationally, despite appeals, requests, and protests made by the Churches of the Holy Land. It is painfully clear now that the authentic Christian presence in the Holy Land is in great danger.

The Patriarchate affirms that attacks on Christian holy sites, properties, heritage, and identity constitute a violation of international law, which explicitly calls for the protection of religious sites in Jerusalem and emphasises the need to respect this basic human right to worship freely.

The Patriarchate points out that Jerusalem is a city extremely important for all Christians since the time of Jesus Christ. The Holy City is a witness to the most significant events in Christian history, that are deeply rooted in the Christian faith. These facts reinforce Christian connection and attachment to this city, which we as Christians, our churches, holy sites and heritage constitute an essential component of its diverse history, present, and future.

This attack on the Church of the Tomb of Virgin Mary in Jerusalem is an atrocious terrorist crime that cannot be justified under any circumstances. The Patriarchate calls upon the international community to intervene immediately to provide security and protection to the Christians of Jerusalem and their holy places, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which are being subjected to deplorable forms of violations and attacks at the hands of radical Israeli organisations.

The Patriarchate further demands that the necessary legal measures be taken against all those involved in terrorist crimes against any holy site.

A video footage from the attack can be seen here:
