



## Concern over increase in acts of hatred and violence against the Christian community and their property in Jerusalem and Israel

The European Global Kairos for Justice network views with increasing concern the growing number of acts of hatred and violence that the Christian community has been subjected to committed by Jewish extremists particularly in Jerusalem over the last few months. In a span of 5 weeks five incidents have been recorded, including occupation of land property of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate near Silwan on December 27, 2022; the desecration of the Protestant Cemetery on January 4, 2023, the desecration of the Chapel of Flagellation on Via Dolorosa on February 2, 2023 and most recently the attack on the Church of Gethsemane and clergy serving there on March 19, 2023.

Church leaders in Jerusalem have condemned these attacks and asked for prosecution of those who have committed the crimes and protection of their property. In a statement on March 19, 2023, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem states that they “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.” Furthermore: “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 calls upon the international community to intervene immediately to provide security and protection to the Christians of Jerusalem and to support the Hashemite Custodianship and its protection of the Jerusalem Holy Sites, 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.”

The World Council of Churches general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay has also condemned the attack that took place in the Church of Gethsemane in Jerusalem and expressed solidarity with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in calling for international protection of holy sites.

Our concern for violations against the Christian community must also be seen within the context of the overall rise in violence and discrimination against Palestinians in general, including a drastic increase in settler attacks against Palestinian communities.

We wish to draw the attention of European churches to these crimes and deep concern expressed by the Christian churches in Jerusalem. We plead with you to raise concern publicly and with relevant authorities in Israel and in your own countries in order that Christians may be able to worship freely and under due protection in their communities and the holy places in Jerusalem and all areas under Israeli rule.

Yours in Christ,



Uffe Gjerding

European Coordinator of Global Kairos for Justice

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