

## **A Statement from the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, concerning the Israeli police measures on Holy Saturday- May 2013**

We, the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, watched with sorrowful hearts the horrific scenes of the brutal treatment of our clergy, people, and pilgrims in the Old City of Jerusalem during Holy Saturday last week. A day of joy and celebration was turned to great sorrow and pain for some of our faithful because they were ill-treated by some Israeli policemen who were present around the gates of the Old City and passages that lead to the Holy Sepulchre.

We understand the necessity and the importance of the presence of security forces to ensure order and stability, and for organizing the celebration of the Holy Fire at the Church of the Resurrection. Yet, it is not acceptable that under pretext of security and order, our clergy and people are indiscriminately and brutally beaten, and prevented from entering their churches, monasteries and convents.

We urge the Israeli authorities especially the Ministry of Interior and the police department in Jerusalem, to seriously consider our complaints, to hold responsibility and to condemn all acts of violence against our faithful and the clergy who were ill-treated by the police. We deplore that every year, the police measures are becoming tougher, and we expect that these accidents will not be repeated and the police should be more sensitive and respectful if they seek to protect and serve.

We also denounce all those who are blaming the churches and holding them responsible of the Israeli measures during Holy Week celebrations. On the contrary, the Heads of churches in Jerusalem condemn all of these measures and violations of Christians' rights to worship in their churches and Holy Sites. Therefore, we condemn all measures of closing the Old City and urge the Israeli authorities to allow full access to the Holy sites during Holy Week of both Church Calendars.

The Heads of Churches of Jerusalem

+Patriarch Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate

+Patriarch Fouad Twal, Latin Patriarchate

+Patriarch Norhan Manougian, Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Patriarchate

+Fr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, ofm, Custos of the Holy Land

+Archbishop Anba Abraham, Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, Jerusalem

+Archbishop Swerios Malki Murad, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate

+Aba Fissiha Tsion, Locum Tenens of the Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate

+Archbishop Joseph-Jules Zerey, Greek-Melkite-Catholic Patriarchate

+Archbishop Moussa El-Hage, Maronite Patriarchal Exarchate

+Bishop Suheil Dawani, Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East

+Bishop Munib Younan, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land

+Bishop Pierre Melki, Syrian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate

+Msgr. Joseph Antoine Kelekian, Armenian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate

