



## PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF LOCAL CHURCHES OF JERUSALEM

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We, the Council of Patriarchs and Heads of Churches of Jerusalem, are here today in Taybeh in solidarity with the local community following an intensifying trend of systemic and targeted attacks against them and their presence. We ask for the prayers, attention, **and action** of the world, particularly that of Christians globally.

On Monday, 7 July 2025, radical Israelis from nearby settlements intentionally set fire near the town's cemetery and the Church of Saint George, which dates back to the 5th century. Taybeh is the last remaining all-Christian town in the West Bank. These actions are a direct and intentional threat to our local community first and foremost, but also to the historic and religious heritage of our ancestors and holy sites. In the face of such threats, the greatest act of bravery is to continue to call this your home. We stand with you, we support your resilience, and you have our prayers.

We give thanks for the local residents and firefighters for extinguishing the fire before our holy sites were destroyed, but we join voices with the local priests - Greek Orthodox, Latin, and Melkite Greek Catholic - issuing a clear plea for support in the face of repeated, systematic attacks from these radicals, which are only growing more frequent.

In recent months, the radicals have led their cattle to graze on the farms of Christians on the east side of Taybeh - the agricultural area - rendering them inaccessible at best but at worst damaging the olive groves that families depend on. Last month, several homes were attacked by these radicals, lighting fires and erecting a billboard that said, translated into English, "there is no future for you here".

The Church has had a faithful presence in this region for nearly 2,000 years. We firmly reject this message of exclusion and reaffirm our commitment to a Holy Land that is a mosaic of different faiths, living peacefully together in dignity and safety.

The Council of Patriarchs and Heads of Churches calls for these radicals to be held accountable by the Israeli authorities, who facilitate and enable their presence around Taybeh. Even in times of war, sacred places must be protected. We call for an immediate and transparent investigation into why the Israeli police did not respond to emergency calls from the local community and why these abhorrent actions continue to go unpunished.

The attacks by the hands of settlers against our community, which is living in peace, must stop, both here in Taybeh and elsewhere throughout the West Bank. This is clearly part of the systematic attacks against Christians that we see unfolding throughout the region.

Furthermore, we ask diplomats, politicians, and church officials worldwide to provide a prayerful and outspoken voice for our ecumenical community in Taybeh, that their presence may be secured and that they can live in peace to worship freely, grow crops without danger, and live in a peace that seems to be in far too short of supply.

We join our fellow clergy in Taybeh in reiterating this of hope in the face of a persistent threat: "truth and justice will ultimately prevail". And we recall the words of the Prophet Amos, which become our prayer during this challenging time: "let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream".

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