



PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF LOCAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM

April 10, 2008

Major General Yosef Mishlev
The Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories
Civil administration – Judea& Samaria
Beit El
Fax: 02 -9977055

Subject: Inhuman treatment at Bethlehem / Jerusalem Check point

Dear Major General Mishlev

We, the Heads of Churches and Christian Communities in Jerusalem write to you today to draw your attention to the worsening treatment by the security personnel at the Bethlehem / Jerusalem Checkpoint.

From our own experience and with testimonies from our faithful, Church staff, and observers, we write to inform you that the recent developments at the Checkpoint are becoming unbearable and unjustifiable by all means. The way men are forced to be lead as sheep, the arrogance of the different new security personnel and their inhumane and disrespectful treatment to the people passing daily be they some Heads of Churches, clergy, or individuals are beyond description. The long queues cannot be interpreted otherwise than intended collective punishment; systematic procedures aimed at dehumanizing ordinary people and cutting off Bethlehem from Jerusalem.

Despite the window of hope opened at Annapolis and the following steps and initiatives to ease the life of the Palestinians mainly on freedom of movement, we can only see more hardship and disgrace for all parties concerned. We acknowledge the need for Israel to secure its citizens but we know too that the way Palestinians are treated at Checkpoints will never be the way to achieve security and Peace. We are alarmed by the increasing number of incidents by security personnel, especially the newly appointed; treating everybody at the Checkpoint in disrespectful ways unfit for human beings. Bishops have been shouted at, children have been petrified, and women humiliated. A young man was



PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF LOCAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM

beaten in front of many people last Saturday. On the same day a young mother had her ID confiscated giving her no chance to complain, and the list goes on...

We urge you and whoever is responsible at these premises to investigate and hopefully correct these very serious deteriorations and maltreatment at this Checkpoint and others wherever they are. Our intentions are Peace driven based on reconciliation; we are concerned for the wellbeing of all parties but this unjustifiable and inhumane treatment must be stopped immediately. As Community leaders we find these harassments demoralizing and the loss of dignity, especially on the doors of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, totally unacceptable.

We implore urgent action please and look forward to your response.

On a more positive side we would wish to inform you of the deep appreciation felt by our faithful and Community members at the extended period given for permits at recent feasts. Ever hopeful that this will continue!

With all good wishes and thanks

Yours,

Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem

Patriarch Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox
Patriarch Michel Sabbah, R.C. Latin
Patriarch Torkom I Manoogian, Armenian Orthodox
Fr Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Custos of the Holy Land
Archbishop Anba Abraham, Coptic Orthodox
Archbishop Swerios Malki Murad, Syrian-Orthodox
Archbishop Abouna Matthias, Ethiopian Orthodox
Archbishop Paul Sayyah, Maronite
Bishop Suhail Dawani, Anglican
Bishop Mounib Younan, Lutheran
Bishop Pierre Malki, Syrian-Catholic
Archimandrite Joseph Saghbini, Greek Catholic
Fr. Rafael Minassian, Armenian Catholic

(cc. H..E. Mr. Meir Shetrit -Minister of Interior – fax: 6217010 – Knesset # 02-6408920)

(cc. Mr. Cesar Marjeh – Director of Christian dept. Ministry of Interior fax: 6217010)

(cc. Col. Saliba Saliba – Superintendent Liaison officer - Christian Communities 6226266)