



Athens, 21 March 2023

Statement of the I.A.O. Secretary General on the terrorist attack against the Church of the Sepulchre of Saint Mary in Gethsemane

The Secretary General of the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (I.A.O.), Member of the Hellenic Parliament Dr. Maximos Charakopoulos made the following statement:

The Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (I.A.O.) strongly condemns the extremist attack by a fanatic, armed with sharp objects, who invaded the Holy Pilgrimage of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in Gethsemane, where the tomb of Virgin Mary is located. This appalling attack took place on Sunday 19th March during the Divine Liturgy, in the presence of Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis.

On the occasion of this episode, followed by other similar ones, the I.A.O., primarily expresses its full solidarity to His Beatitude Theophilos III, Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine, as well as to the other Churches in Jerusalem, who face such unacceptable practices, and appeals:

- a. To the competent authorities of Israel for the imposition of the prescribed sanctions on the perpetrator.
- b. For the provision of all the necessary measures for the protection of the pilgrimage, as well as all the pilgrimages of the Holy Brotherhood of the All-Holy Sepulchre and the free, unobstructed and safe access of the faithful to them.

We declare once again that a definitive end must be put to the illegal and terrorist actions of extremist parastatal groups in Israel against Christians, being part of the further expulsion of the Christian element from the Holy Land.

We anticipate the authorities of Israel to hear our appeal and take all necessary measures, which will contribute to the absolute protection of Christian pilgrimages from extremist circles' actions, and hope that we will not witness such sad events again in the future.