



Madam Director-General,

I am writing to you concerning the continuous Israeli violations of cultural and religious properties in East Jerusalem, in the occupied Palestinian Territory.

On December 4, 2020, an Israeli settler set fire to the Gethsemane Church located on the Mount of Olives in occupied Jerusalem. Local Palestinians halted the assailant, and were able miraculously to stop the fire and further damage to this historical church.

The Gethsemane Church, referred to as the Church of All Nations, is an important Catholic church built on the historic site of the Mount of Olives next to the Gethsemane garden, where Christians believe Jesus was betrayed by Judas, one of his followers, and arrested by the Romans before being crucified.

This is not the first time that Israeli settlers attempt to burn a Palestinian church:

- The Benedictine Dormition Abbey in Jerusalem has been vandalized on five different occasions in recent years, including with anti-Christian graffiti written in Hebrew. In 2014, an assailant tried to burn the abbey down.
- In June 2015, an arson attack damaged the Church of the Multiplication, which is located on the Sea of Galilee where Jesus Christ fed thousands of people through the miraculous multiplication of loaves and fishes.
- In September 2017, vandals shattered stained-glass windows and destroyed a statue of Mary in St. Stephen Church in the Beit Jamal Salesian monastery, 25 miles west of Jerusalem.

These attacks are direct violations of *The Declaration of Principles on Tolerance of UNESCO (1995)* and the provisions of *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* as well as UNESCO values and principles against violent extremism. Such assaults are also detrimental to the diversity of cultural expressions. They constitute serious violations of the text and spirit of the UNESCO 2005 *convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions*.

My delegation strongly condemn the continuous escalation of Israeli settlers violation's against Christian and Muslim holy sites. Madam Director-General, I urge you to denounce the aggressions against freedom of thought, conscience and religion perpetrated by Israeli settlers in occupied Palestine.

I kindly ask you to reflect the above-mentioned violations in the appropriate working document of the 211th session of the Executive Board and to annex this letter to the same document.

Please accept, Madam Director General the assurances of my highest consideration.

Ambassador Mounir Anastas
Alternate Permanent Delegate

H.E. Madam Audrey Azoulay
Director General of UNESCO
Bur 6 022

Cc: President of the General Conference
Chairperson of the Executive Board
Assistant Director-General for Culture
Assistant Director-General for the Social and Human Sciences

مستوطن اسرائيلي خلال محاولته حرق واحدة من أقدس كنائس المسيحيين بالقدس المحتلة وهي كنيسة الجتسمانية في جبل الزيتون، الكنيسة بحسب الإيمان المسيحي تقوم في الموضع الذي خان فيه يهودا الإسخريوطي المسيح وسلمه لليهود الذين بدورهم قاده للصلب.





