



Joint Press Release
The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Custody of the Holy Land

Holy City of Jerusalem
Palm Sunday, 29 March 2026

This morning, the Israeli Police prevented the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Head of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land, together with the Custos of the Holy Land, the Most Reverend Fr. Francesco Ielpo, OFM, the official Guardian of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, from entering the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, as they made their way to celebrate the Palm Sunday Mass.

The two were stopped en route, while proceeding privately and without any characteristics of a procession or ceremonial act, and were compelled to turn back. As a result, and for the first time in centuries, the Heads of the Church were prevented from celebrating the Palm Sunday Mass at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

This incident is a grave precedent, and disregard the sensibilities of billions of people around the world who, during this week, look to Jerusalem.

The Heads of the Churches have acted with full responsibility and, since the outset of the war, have complied with all imposed restrictions: public gatherings were cancelled, attendance was prohibited, and arrangements were made to broadcast the celebrations to hundreds of millions of faithful worldwide, who, during these days of Easter, turn their eyes to Jerusalem and to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Preventing the entry of the Cardinal and the Custos, who bear the highest ecclesiastical responsibility for the Catholic Church and the Holy Places, constitutes a manifestly unreasonable and grossly disproportionate measure.

This hasty and fundamentally flawed decision, tainted by improper considerations, represents an extreme departure from basic principles of reasonableness, freedom of worship, and respect for the Status Quo.

The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Custody of the Holy Land express their profound sorrow to the Christian faithful in the Holy Land and throughout the world that prayer on one of the most sacred days of the Christian calendar has thus been prevented.