



Israeli police stop Latin Patriarch from entering Church of Holy Sepulchre

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29.03.2026 - In a joint press release, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Custos of the Holy Land report they were blocked from entering the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem by Israeli police, calling it "a manifestly unreasonable and grossly disproportionate measure." Meanwhile, a subsequent press release from the Latin Patriarchate issued a few days later states that the matters "have been addressed and resolved".

The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Custody of the Holy Land have released a joint statement stating that, on the morning of Palm Sunday, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, together with the Custos of the Holy Land, Fr. Francesco Ielpo, OFM, the official Guardian of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, were prevented from entering the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, as they made their way to celebrate the Palm Sunday Mass.

Released on Sunday, the statement said both Church leaders were stopped en route by Israeli police, "while proceeding privately and without any characteristics of a procession or ceremonial act" and were forced to turn back.

"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," the statement noted.

It described the event as "a grave precedent" and disregarding "the sensibilities of billions of people around the world who, during this week, look to Jerusalem."

Blocked despite compliance with restrictions

The statement said the Patriarch and the Custos of the Holy Land have acted with full responsibility since the start of the war, complying with all restrictions requiring that public gatherings be cancelled, attendance prohibited, and arrangements be 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."

"Grossly disproportionate measure"

Preventing the entry of Cardinal Pizzaballa and Fr. Ielpo, who hold the highest ecclesiastical responsibility for the Catholic Church and Holy Places, "constitutes a manifestly unreasonable and grossly disproportionate measure."

The joint statement further underscored that "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 Patriarch and Custos both expressed their "profound sorrow" to the Christian faithful in the Holy Land and around the world "that prayer on one of the most sacred days of the Christian

calendar has thus been prevented."

In a further press release by the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem dated March 30, 2026, states:

"The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Custody of the Holy Land hereby confirm that the matters concerning the Holy Week and Easter celebrations at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre have been addressed and resolved in coordination with the relevant authorities. In agreement with the Israel Police, access for representatives of the Churches has been secured in order to conduct the liturgies and ceremonies and to preserve the ancient Easter traditions at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Naturally, and in light of the current state of war, the existing restrictions on public gatherings remain in force for the time being. Accordingly, the Churches will ensure that the liturgies and prayers are broadcast live to the faithful in the Holy Land and throughout the world.

We express our sincere gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Isaac Herzog, President of the State of Israel, for his prompt attention and valued intervention. We also extend our appreciation to the Heads of State and officials who acted swiftly to convey their firm positions, many of whom personally reached out to express their closeness and support.

We wish to emphasize that religious faith constitutes a supreme human value, shared by all religions, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Druze, and others. Especially in times of hardship and conflict, such as those presently endured, safeguarding the freedom of worship remains a fundamental and shared duty.

It is our hope that appropriate arrangements will continue to be found, enabling prayer to take place in places of worship, particularly in the Holy Places of all religions, in a manner that respects both legitimate safety needs and the religious observances and prayers that are of profound importance to hundreds of millions of believers.

The Church remains in continuous dialogue with the authorities, including the Israel Police. We pray and hope for an end to the tragic war affecting the region, mindful of the heavy consequences it has on all.

The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Custody of the Holy Land reaffirm their commitment to dialogue, mutual respect, and the preservation of the Status Quo.

Blessed Holy Week."

Sources: [Vatican News](#) and [Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem](#).