



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΣΙΚΑΓΟΥ

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ISRAEL APOLOGIZES TO METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO CLERGY

On Tuesday, October 25 Consul Omer Eshel, Midwest Regional Director of Tourism for the State of Israel, met at length with His Grace Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos, Chancellor of the Metropolis of Chicago, and the Rev. Fr. Mark Muñoz, priest of the Holy Anargyroi parish in Rochester, MN. This meeting was a follow-up to a formal letter of apology sent to Metropolitan Iakovos and Bishop Demetrios, Chancellor, from Consul Haim Gutin, Tourism Commissioner – North and South America for the Government of Israel.

Consul Eshel, in one of his first acts upon assuming his office, requested the meeting in response to unfortunate circumstances experienced by His Grace and Fr. Muñoz during their respective pilgrimages to Israel, and specifically the Holy City of Jerusalem. While visiting the holy sites unwarranted disrespectful gestures were made towards both clergymen by certain zealots. His Grace was spit upon by a young ultra-Orthodox Jewish zealot while leaving the Old City after an audience with His Beatitude, Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem. Fr. Muñoz was spit upon on two different occasions by two groups of young zealot students.

Consul Eshel assumed his duties as Midwest Regional Director of Tourism for the State of Israel about one month ago. He categorically condemned the actions and emphasized several times that the State of Israel does not condone nor promote these inappropriate manifestations of religious prejudice and bigotry. A productive and amiable dialogue ensued with both sides categorically and wholeheartedly condemning any and all acts of intolerance on behalf of their respective communities.

Guidelines were suggested wherein the Ministry of Tourism could advise potential Orthodox Christian pilgrims of practical protocol procedures which would allow for their experience to be as pleasant and safe as possible. Consul Eshel presented both His Grace and Fr. Muñoz gifts on behalf of the Consul General of Israel and encouraged them to continue to lead pilgrimages to the Holy Lands.