

Statement by the Priests of the Churches of Taybeh – Ramallah / Palestine Regarding the Repeated Attacks by Settlers on Land, Holy Sites, and Property

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We, the priests of the three churches of Taybeh – the Greek Orthodox Church, the Latin Church, and the Melkite Greek Catholic Church – raise our voices on behalf of the people of our town and our parishioners to strongly condemn the ongoing and grave series of attacks targeting Taybeh. These assaults threaten the security and stability of our town and aim at undermining the dignity of its residents and the sanctity of its sacred land.

On Monday, July 7, 2025, settlers deliberately set fire near the town's cemetery and the historic Church of Saint George (Al-Khadr), dating back to the 5th century – one of the oldest religious landmarks in Palestine. Were it not for the vigilance of local residents and the swift intervention of firefighting teams, the damage could have been far more catastrophic.

In a scene that has become provocatively routine, settlers continue to graze their cattle in Taybeh's agricultural lands, including family-owned fields and areas near residential homes, without deterrence or intervention from the authorities. These violations go beyond provocation; they cause direct harm to olive trees – a vital source of livelihood for the people of Taybeh – and prevent farmers from accessing and cultivating their land.

The eastern area of Taybeh, which comprises more than half of the town's territory and includes the bulk of its agricultural activity, has effectively become an open target for illegal settlement outposts that expand quietly under military protection. These outposts serve as a base for further assaults on the land and its people.

As priests, we bear a pastoral and moral responsibility toward our community. We cannot remain silent in the face of these relentless attacks that threaten our very existence on this land. Taybeh – known in the Gospel as “Ephraim,” the place to which Jesus withdrew before His Passion (John 11:54) – is the last remaining entirely Christian town in the West Bank. Its wholly Christian population represents a unique presence in the region, a living testimony that dates back to the time of Christ. This enduring spiritual and cultural legacy, preserved faithfully by the people of Taybeh across generations, is now at serious risk of erosion and displacement due to the systematic targeting of land, sacred places, and the local community.

We call upon local and international actors – especially consuls, ambassadors, and church representatives around the world – to take the following actions:

1. Launch an immediate and transparent investigation into the incidents of arson and the ongoing assaults on property, agricultural land, and holy sites.
2. Apply diplomatic pressure on the occupying authorities to halt settler actions and prevent them from entering or grazing in Taybeh's lands.
3. Dispatch international and church delegations to conduct field visits, document the damages, and bear witness to the deteriorating reality on the ground.
4. Support the people of Taybeh through economic and agricultural initiatives, and strengthen their resilience with effective legal accompaniment.

We believe that the Holy Land cannot remain alive without its indigenous people. Forcibly removing farmers from their land, threatening their churches, and encircling their towns is a wound to the living heart of this nation. Yet we remain steadfast in our shared faith and hope – that truth and justice will ultimately prevail.