



## **Statement by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem on recent legislation in Estonia affecting freedom of worship**



“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

Psalm 133:1

In the spirit and yearning for unity within our church, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem raises concerns of the passing of a new law, The Churches and Congregations Act, by the Estonian Parliament (Riigikogu) on 9 April forcing churches to sever ties with the Russian Orthodox Church. This decision will affect countless worshippers in churches and convents across Estonia.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem stands strongly for the right to worship safely and freely. In Jerusalem, we are acutely aware of restrictions on worship in the name of security, as we experience year after year at the Divine Liturgy of Holy Fire. There is no reason to weaponise religious belief and practice among the peaceful. We urge the Estonian government to reconsider this law for the sake of all people of faith in Estonia. Within our church, this is but yet another example of the urgent need for unity.

The world has grown weary of conflict, and at this time it is paramount that the Orthodox church invests in dialogue and healing. We are one body, though we are many, and we must work together to be the peacemakers humanity cries out for. We cannot do this if we are plagued by division and strife. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem recognises the challenges, pain, and divisions that exist in Europe and around the world during this challenging time, and we renew our call for fraternal discussions rooted in dialogue and reconciliation.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, rooted in centuries of reconciliation and peace efforts, offers a hand of goodwill and mediation to our Patriarchal brothers. Let us gather to sow the seeds of peace and healing so that we may bring about an end to suffering and promote healing within the Orthodox family.

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