



The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem Condemns the Flagrant Attack on St. Andrew's Anglican Church in Ramallah

August 18, 2022

Early this morning around 3:00 am, Israeli forces made an unannounced and unwarranted raid on the premises of St. Andrew's Anglican/Episcopal Church in Ramallah. Making a forced entry, the soldiers wrecked the church's entrance by smashing through the door's lock and security glass. For two hours, Israeli soldiers occupied the entire complex, which includes the church sanctuary, parish hall, church offices, rectory, and the Arab Episcopal Medical Center.

The community living inside the church compound felt unsafe during the assault: The sound of gunshots, stun grenades, and the smashing of doors caused terror among the families living inside the compound.

Although there is no justification for this shocking incursion into church premises, the Israeli forces only later justified this harsh treatment as a raid on Al-Haq, one of the most prominent Human Rights groups in the West Bank, to whom St. Andrew's rents an office with a totally separate entrance from the church.

The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, led by the Most Reverend Hosam E. Naoum, unequivocally condemns this attack on one of its sacred places of worship, as well as the devastation of church property, as both a violation of international law and a terroristic act against the entire community.

Places of worship and church compounds should be sanctuaries for communities to feel safe to practice their faith and ministry. Indeed, the UN Human Rights Committee has explained that "the concept of worship extends to ... the building of places of worship" (Human Rights Committee, General Comment 22, Article 18, par. 4, 1994). The Diocese considers the offense on the complex of St. Andrew's in Ramallah an assault against its free exercise of religion as an established and officially recognized Christian Church.

The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem therefore stands firmly with the Rector of St. Andrew's, the Rev. Fadi Diab, and the whole community of St. Andrew's in Ramallah, as well as with all who are distressed by this irresponsible act of violence. Accordingly, it demands that the Israeli authorities conduct a speedy and impartial investigation into this incident, followed by serious disciplinary action against the offenders.