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The Legacy of Palestine



**WHERE DO PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS  
LIVE IN THE OCCUPIED OLD CITY  
OF JERUSALEM**







# WHERE DO PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS LIVE IN THE OCCUPIED OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

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### **PALESTINIAN VISION (PALVISION)**

PalVision is an independent Palestinian non-profit civil society organization, that is not affiliated with any governmental or partisan entity. The programs of the organization target youth, their educational and economic development, and it has a vision that the Palestinian youth take collective action towards the sustainable development of their society, so it seeks to mobilize and empower them to achieve their aspirations, preserve their collective Palestinian identity, and initiate sustainable youth-led development through volunteerism, social activism, entrepreneurship, and advocacy, at the local, national and international levels.

This study is part of the efforts PalVision puts in to preserve the religious, civilizational and cultural heritage of Jerusalem, within the “Irth Palestine” project, that works towards the protection of the Islamic and Christian cultural heritage in Jerusalem, funded by the European Union.

The opinions and views in this study belong solely to the researcher, and do not necessarily reflect or represent the position or opinion of PalVision or the European Union.



This Factsheet is part of the ‘Protecting the Islamic and Christian Cultural Heritage in Jerusalem’ project (in short: ‘IRTH’, which means heritage or legacy in Arabic). The project is being implemented by the Palestinian Vision Organisation (PalVision) in partnership with the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA) and the ACT institution for Studies and Alternative Means of Conflict Resolution, and supported by the European Union.

The Palestinian cultural heritage constitutes a central pillar in the roots of the Arab identity of the City of Jerusalem with all its religious, historical, archaeological, cultural, social and economic components. The project seeks to empower the steadfastness of the people of Jerusalem, consolidate the Palestinian national narrative, and protect lands, real estate, and property, especially the Islamic and Christian endowments (‘WAQF’). The project also seeks to contribute to the documentation of Israeli violations in the city, especially the Israeli attempts to distort and falsify the historical narrative, and change the Arab identity of the city and its cultural landmarks..





### **DR. USAMA SALMAN**

Palestinian, born and raised in Jerusalem.

His passion and commitment toward Christianity and the development to strengthen the Palestinian Christian community in the Holy Land in the last years became his main interest in his studies, research's, work, advocacy and awareness towards the Palestinian Christian community culture and heritage, religion, economy, social diversity, and politics to prevent the defacement of the Palestinian Christian in the Holy Land.

His recent research, that aimed to develop and support the Palestinian Christian community's role in safeguarding the Palestinian Christian cultural heritage as an integral part of the city's identity increased to his knowledge and experience towards finding a new strategy to strengthen the Christian religion identity through education and awareness for Palestinian Christians.

He has been working on a comprehensive analysis through his PhD program on how to help the Palestinian Christian community in the holy land especially in Jerusalem. His research analysis focuses on strengthening the Palestinian Christian presence through strategic programs. He also concentrates on maintaining and preserving the Christian identity, Christian communities, and its congregations.

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A former Director of the Association of International Development Agencies in Jerusalem, a consortium of 85 international NGOs, and former Deputy Director of Diakonia's IHL Resource Center, also in Jerusalem. He also is a New York qualified lawyer with wide-ranging international law, negotiations and diplomatic experience, including in the occupied Palestinian territory. He worked as a legal advisor to the PLO in peace negotiations with Israel, consulted for UNRWA and UN OCHA oPt, among others, and managed a political dialogue initiative in Libya for the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue during 2011-12. Among a decade of assignments as an award-winning photojournalist, Tom covered the first Palestinian uprising in the oPt, Syria and the summer 1993 Lebanon war, attempts to implement the Oslo Peace Accords throughout the 1990s, the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh and the Aceh GAM rebel insurrection. Tom obtained a B.A. in Economics from McGill University and a J.D. from Rutgers Law School in Newark, New Jersey

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## INTRODUCTION

Jerusalem is known as being the city at the heart of the Christian faith and many Christian tourists flock to Jerusalem each year to marvel at the magnificent churches and shrines and to walk in the steps of Jesus. Sadly, over the years it has become very difficult, not just for the small Christian population but for all Palestinians, to live in Jerusalem. This is because of the Israeli Occupation policies before, during and after the Nakba in 1948, as well as several economic, social, cultural and religious issues.

Almost half of the (remaining) Christian population of Jerusalem live in the Old City. This information sheet presents a narrative description and statistical information about the local Palestinian Christian residential area inside the Old City of Jerusalem. It is worth noting that there is a historical coexistence between Christian and Muslim families in the Christian Quarter, as well as a large number of Christian monasteries and institutions in Muslim-majority areas. In fact, the name “Islamic Quarter” does not exist on the ground amongst local Palestinians.

When Jerusalem is mentioned, many Christians from all over the world think about the churches and monasteries, while they lack information about the indigenous people, the Palestinian Christians whose numbers continue to decline. This decline was dramatic after the Nakba (the Palestinian Catastrophe) in 1948 and continued to decrease further after the 1967 Israeli occupation of the eastern part of Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza Strip. There are many causes that have led to declining numbers of Palestinian Christians but the oppressive conditions of the Israeli occupation which have resulted in reduced freedoms, justice and human rights for Palestinians, has undoubtedly been the main factor in the declining Christian population of Palestine in general, and Jerusalem in particular.





Christians decreased in number during the British Mandate period as Jewish immigration increased. “The Christian population in 1944 was 148,910, with 29,350 of them in Jerusalem , which accounted for around 8% of the total population of Palestine”<sup>1</sup>. In 1948, the Christians in Jerusalem numbered around 25,000<sup>2</sup> and in 1967 their number had decreased to 12,000.<sup>3</sup> The Nakba in 1948, and the Israeli occupation in 1967 played a direct role in this decline.

Most research studies concerning Christian migration from the Holy Land agree that the main reason and motivation are the repressive Israeli policies. Currently, the Christian population in Jerusalem is about 9,800 which represents less than one percent of the total population of the city of Jerusalem. 40% of the total population of Palestinian Christians live in the central part of Jerusalem, mainly in and around the Old City of Jerusalem, while the rest live in the northern part of Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup> These Christians belong to different denominations: Roman Catholic 55%, Greek Orthodox 23%, Greek Catholic 9%, 4% Syriac Orthodox, 4%, Armenian 3% and others 3%<sup>5</sup>.

The Palestinian Christian population of Jerusalem has been an under-researched group, and there is a lack of information about where Christians live in the Old City and about their lifestyle and heritage. This information sheet provides information about their residential areas inside the Old City of Jerusalem. It is intended to raise awareness about the existence of Christians living in Jerusalem as an important step in recognising the threat that they face and taking action towards the protection and preservation of their presence.

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1- Justin McCarthy, *The Population of Palestine: Population History and Statistics of the Late Ottoman Period and Mandate* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1991), pp. 37-40.

2- Raphael Bonamo, O.F.M. (1988). “Jews, Moslems, and Christians” P.135. Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem.

3- Eugene Hoade, O.F.M. (1984), “Guide to the Holy Land” P. 94. Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem.

4- George Akroush, “To integration or to immigration” A community-based study on the needs, challenges, aspirations, and the way forward for Christian youth in Jerusalem. Jerusalem, 2019. Pp 14-15.

5- Ibid 4

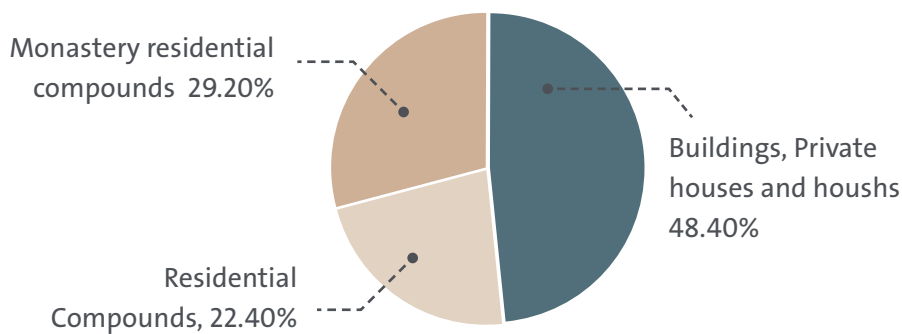




## WHERE DO PALESTINIAN CHRISTIANS LIVE IN THE OCCUPIED OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM?

The Palestinian Christians living in the Old City of Jerusalem are divided into three different categories of residential units: Monastery residential compounds, Christian residential compounds and buildings, private houses and housh(s) (courtyards).

Palestinian Christian Residential Units in the Occupied Old City of Jerusalem



### I. MONASTERY RESIDENTIAL COMPOUNDS

#### 1. Monastery Residential Compounds

A monastery residential compound is a closed area, that contains residential units around a church, mainly with one entrance. Most are located in the Old City of Jerusalem. There are 14 monastery residential compounds, 12 of which belong to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, while the other two belong to the Armenian Orthodox and the Armenian Catholics. This type of residential compound is considered as a Christian Waqf and is controlled and managed by different Christian denominations. The compounds present around 29.2% of the total Christian residential units in the Old City of Jerusalem. Each of these monastery residential compounds is named after a Christian Saint. Historically, many of these residential compounds were monasteries and convents built by monks who came from different countries to be close to the Holy Places, especially the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. They are categorised as small (containing up to 10 residential units), medium (up to 25 units), and large (up to 48 units).<sup>6</sup>

6- Ibid





ΕΛΛΗΝΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΝ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΕΙΟΝ  
ΙΕΡΟΣΟΛΥΜΩΝ  
ΙΕΡΑ ΜΟΝΗ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΧΑΡΑΛΑΜΠΟΥΣ

44



44  
2:8  
407







## 2. Saint John the Beheaded Monastery and Residential Compound

Located on the southern end of the Christian Quarter Street. The monastery is called in Arabic Deir Youhanna Maqtou` Al-Ras. The name of the monastery commemorates the Bible story of the beheading of John the Baptist by the orders of Herod Antipas through the vengeful request of his stepdaughter Salome and her mother Herodias<sup>7</sup>. It is built on an early 5th century Byzantine church which is located on a lower level, while the dome and bell tower that are seen today date back to the 11th century. This monastery is considered a small residential compound<sup>8</sup>.

7- Mathew 14: 1-12. Holy Bible, New International Version, Colorado: Biblica: 2011

8- The Jerusalem Development Co. V: 24-47. Retrieved 16 November 2017. Online Website: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church\\_of\\_Saint\\_John\\_the\\_Baptist,\\_Jerusalem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_Saint_John_the_Baptist,_Jerusalem).





### 3. St. Michael and St. Gabriel Monastery and Residential Compound

The monastery was built in the 14th century by Serbian monks and dedicated to St. Michael and St. Gabriel. The meaning of the names is revealed in the Bible. St. Michael means “Who is as God” and his name is a battle cry; both shield and weapon in the struggle, and an eternal trophy of victory. St. Gabriel means “Man of God”, or “Strength of God”. Serbian monks lived there from 1303 until 1623. It’s a large monastery located on the north-western edge of the Christian Quarter and is considered among the large residential compounds.







#### 4. St. George Monastery and Residential Compound

The monastery was built in the 19th century to honour St. George who is considered one of the most prominent Saints in Christianity. St. George is also known as George of Lydda. He was a soldier in the Roman army of Lod in Palestine, who was sentenced to death for refusing to recant his Christian faith. He became one of the most venerated in Christianity. Patriarch Chrysanthos received a generous donation from Nikolaos Kara Loannis in 1729 and decided to build a hospital for the needs of the Fathers and the pilgrims on the premises of the monastery of Saint George. This monastery is a small-size residential compound.







## 5. St. Theodorus Monastery and Residential Compound

This monastery is located on the north-western edge of the Christian Quarter on Casa Nova Street, adjacent to the Casa Nova Pilgrims' guesthouse. The monastery is named after Saint Theodore. He was born in 424 CE in Cappadocia, Turkey and was a scholar known for his wisdom. There is a miraculous icon of Saint Theodore Stratelates as well as a chapel dedicated to Saint Spyridon with a very old icon of the Saint. In 1877, Archimandrite Veniamin wrote that Russian women pilgrims stayed in this monastery. The Patriarch of Jerusalem Ioannis III (516-524) founded a church dedicated to Saint Theodores in Jerusalem. It is one of the Greek Orthodox monasteries in the Old City and is a medium-size residential compound.







## 6. St. Nicholas Monastery and Residential Compound

The monastery is located in the northern wing of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate. The church was founded in the 17th century. The monastery is dedicated to the 4th century Bishop Nicholas, who is the patron saint of children and sailors. The site was maintained by an Order of Georgian monks who left the city at the end of the 17th century. Since then, the site has been in the possession of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate. This monastery is considered to be a medium-size residential compound<sup>9</sup>.

9- Jerusalem Faith Equities. "A project by Terrestrial Jerusalem". [Online] available at: [https://tj.jfe.mhttps://www.wikiwand.com/en/Monastery\\_of\\_Saint\\_Saviourbarsinai.com/maps/fullPage](https://tj.jfe.mhttps://www.wikiwand.com/en/Monastery_of_Saint_Saviourbarsinai.com/maps/fullPage)







## 7. St. Charalambos Monastery & Residential Compound

This is a Greek Orthodox monastery located north-east of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It is the largest among all the monastery residential compounds. In the past, the place was used only as a monastery dedicated to St. Charalambos. He was a Priest to the Christians in Magnesia, capital of Thessaly, and became a martyr after he was tortured and beheaded at the time of the Emperor Septimius Severus in 198 CE <sup>10</sup>

10- The Greek orthodox Patriarchate, [Online] available at: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/blog/2017/02/23/the-feast-of-st-charalambos-at-the-patriarchate-2>.







## 8. St. Catherine Monastery & Residential Compound

This is a women's monastery located in the heart of the Christian Quarter on Al Rusul Street, with a church located in the centre of the compound. The monastery and the church are named after Catherine of Alexandria. She studied Christianity and philosophy, and scorned the irreverent men and acknowledged Christ. She was martyred for her Christian faith during the reign of Maxentius. She is also known as "Saint Catherine of the Wheel" and is considered one of the most important Saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The monastery was turned into a small-size residential compound.





### 9. St. Euthymius (Aftimos) Monastery & Residential Compound

The monastery is located in the heart of the Christian Quarter between the two streets, Al Rusal and As-Sayyida Street. The monastery and church are named in honour of St. Euthymius (377-473 CE). He was devoted to the Church since he was young and became the most prominent father of the Judean Desert Monasticism and was often called “St Euthymius the Great”. This monastery is a small-size residential compound.







### 10. St. Spyridon Monastery & Residential Compound

This Greek Orthodox monastery is located on the Jabsha Ascent Street, in the northern edge of the Christian Quarter. Spyridon is a Greek Saint who lived between (237-348 CE). In the monastery there is an icon of the Saint which was miraculously depicted on glass, a stone with the Saint's footprint and a piece of his shoe which the Bishop of Corfu Athanasius offered as a present to the monastery in 1886. There is also a stone that Christ believed to have stepped on when he was twelve years old, among other significant objects in the monastery. The monastery is a small-size residential compound.







### 11. St. Panaghia Monastery & Residential Compound

This is a women's Greek Orthodox monastery in the Christian Quarter, 100 metres away from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The monastery is dedicated to St. Panaghia, one of the female Saints of the Greek Orthodox Church. It is a small-size residential compound.







## 12. St. Nicodemus Monastery & Residential Compound

This Greek Orthodox monastery is called Deir Al-Adas in Arabic, which means Monastery of Lentils. It is located at Haret Al-Saadiyah Street about 240 meters west of Lions' Gate and about 230 meters south of Herod's Gate. Nicodemus, together with Joseph of Arimathe, asked Pilatus to give them the body of Christ for burial after the sacrifice on the Cross. In a basement under the Holy Church, there is Saint Peter's prison from which he was miraculously freed by an angel. According to tradition, the name of the 'Lentil Monastery' is a reference to an ancient place where the poor would flock to receive a bowl of hot soup that was made at the direction of the Greek Orthodox Church in Jerusalem. It is a medium-size residential compound.



### 13. Armenian Catholic Patriarchate Residential Compound

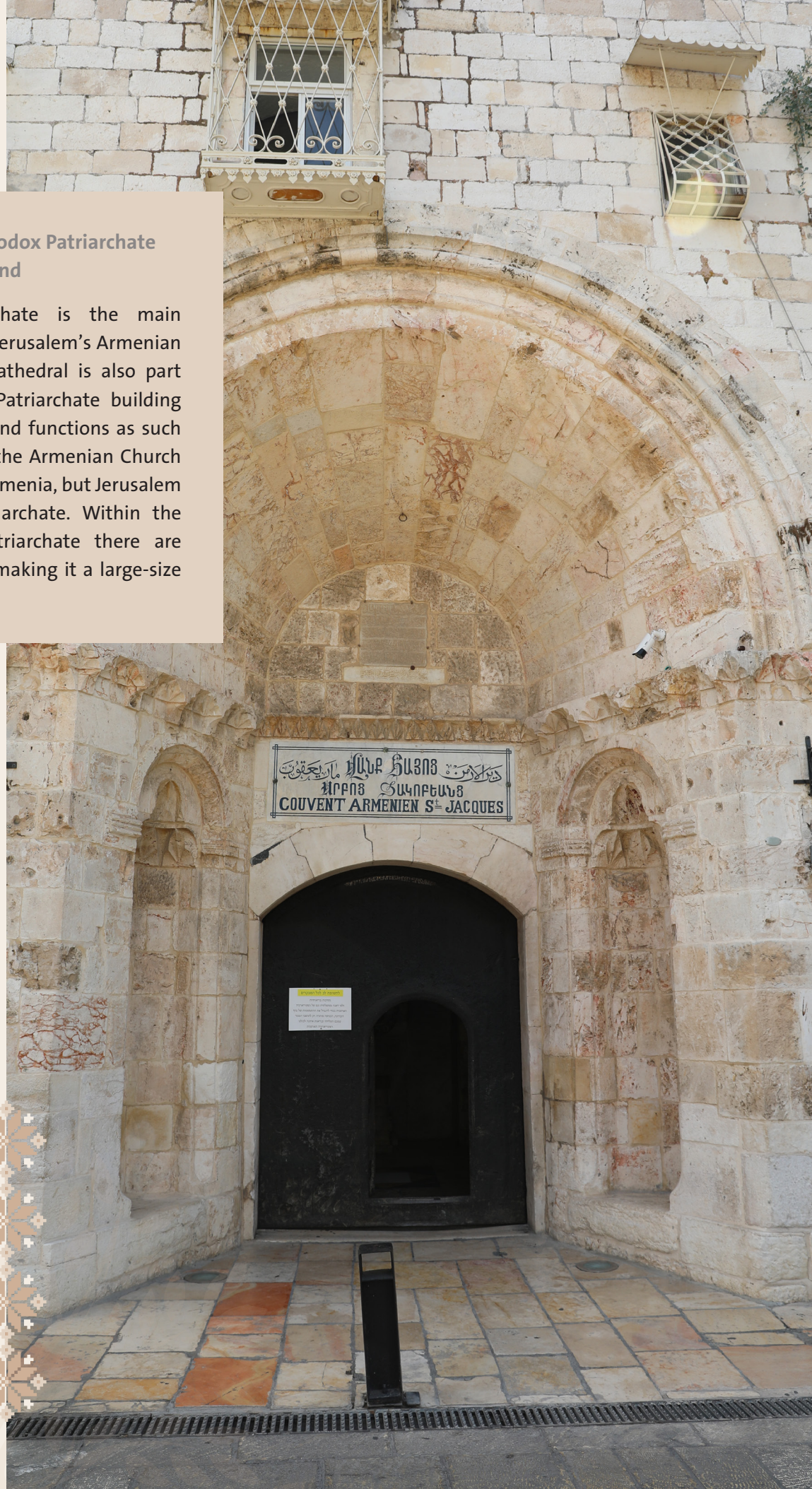
The Armenian Catholic Patriarchate was founded in the Holy Land in 1840. This is the most significant achievement of its Chief Patriarch, who resides in Antelias, Lebanon. The Armenian faction split from the Armenian Orthodox Church in 1740. Completed in 1885, the complex includes the third and fourth Stations of the Cross, a church, the patriarchate, a hostel for pilgrims, clerical staff housing, family housing for the community, an open courtyard, a cafeteria and a souvenir shop. It is a small-size residential compound.





#### 14. Armenian Orthodox Patriarchate Residential Compound

The Armenian Patriarchate is the main administrative centre of Jerusalem's Armenian community. St. James Cathedral is also part of the compound. The Patriarchate building was completed in 1853, and functions as such to this day. The head of the Armenian Church (the Catholicos) lives in Armenia, but Jerusalem is an independent patriarchate. Within the Armenian Orthodox Patriarchate there are several residential units making it a large-size residential compound.







### 15. Saint George Monastery and Residential Compound (Armenian Quarter)

This is a Greek Orthodox monastery and church located originally at the border between the Armenian and Jewish Quarters. Saint George, also called George of Lydda, was a Christian who is venerated as a saint in Christianity. He was a Roman soldier from Palestinian origins who was sentenced to death for refusing to recant his Christian faith. The complex was established during the Ottoman period at the beginning of the 18th century. It is a small-size residential compound.







## II. CHRISTIAN RESIDENTIAL COMPOUNDS

In the Old City of Jerusalem, there are also Christian residential compounds, which are closed or semi-closed areas that have one or more entrances with a façade surrounded by residential units. They represent 22.4% of the total Christian residential units in the Old City. This type of residential compounds is mixed Waqf that belong to Muslims and Christians and are managed by different Church denominations through leasing and sub-leasing to the Christian community in Jerusalem. These residential compounds vary in size between 10 to 45 units. Historically, they were built by various Muslim and Christian families & religious institutions and were leased to the Palestinian Christian community in Jerusalem. Some of these compounds have several names that are used by the local people.





### 1. Dar Al-Consul Residential Compound

Dar Al-Consul Compound is around 900 m<sup>2</sup> in size, comprising of residential units and five courtyards. It is owned by the Franciscan custody of the Holy Land. The lower part originally dates back to the Byzantine, early Mamluk and crusader era, while the upper part dates back to the Ottoman period, in addition to a 19th century building. It is called the Consul House because it used to be the German Consul's residence in the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup>- Al-Quds University, report on the construction work. Visit the Website [Online]: <https://www.alquds.edu/en/staff-news/143590-aqu-celebrates-restoration-of-dar-al-consul-compound-in-old-city-of-jerusalem.html>







## 2. Musa Effendi Residential Compound

Dar Musa Effendi is located on At-Takiyya Ascent Street, comprising of a medium-size residential compound that dates back to the Ottoman era. It is managed by the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land. On the lower level of the compound is the interpretation centre that was opened after the renovation<sup>12</sup>.

12- Visit [Online] [www. http://www.maic.ps/.com](http://www.maic.ps/.com)







### 3. Dar Ishak Beik Residential Compound

This is located next to the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate and adjacent to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It is one of the Christian medium-size residential compounds that are managed by the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land.







#### 4. Al-Masbaneh residential compound

Located next to the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate and adjacent to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The name Masbaneh is the Arabic term for a traditional olive oil soap factory. This residential compound is one of the small residential compounds that are controlled by Christian and Muslim families.







##### 5. Al-Saha Residential Compound

Located in the Christian Quarter, ownership of this large residential compound is shared between the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, the Greek Orthodox Church and private Christian and Muslim families. The name Saha in Arabic means a “courtyard”.







## 6. Dar Al-Kabirah Residential Compound

This is a medium-size residential compound located on Aqabat Al-Khanqa Street and opposite to the 8th station of the Via Dolorosa. The name Al-Kabirah in Arabic means big or large. The Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land manages this residential compound.







### 7. Dar Rabaah Residential Compound

This is a medium-size residential compound located at Qanater Khudair Street in the Muslim Quarter. It is managed by the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land. The name of this compound most probably refers to a local family name that used to live in the area.







### 8. Al-Lukanda Residential Compound

This small-size residential compound is located in the Christian Quarter, and is controlled and managed by the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land. The name Lukanda is Arabic for a guest house or small hotel.



### III. BUILDINGS, PRIVATE HOUSES AND HOUSHS

Next to the monasteries and Christian residential compounds, there are several residential buildings, private houses and houshs, owned by different Church denominations and Christian families. The meaning of Housh in the Old City of Jerusalem is a set of residential units that are used mainly by the same family members, and in many cases houshs are named after the family who either live, or used to live, in these residential units. This type of residential housing represents about 48.4% of the total Christian residential units in the Old City of Jerusalem. About 9% of this category are Muslim private Waqf leased to Christian religious institutions and rented by Christian families in Jerusalem.



## CONCLUSION

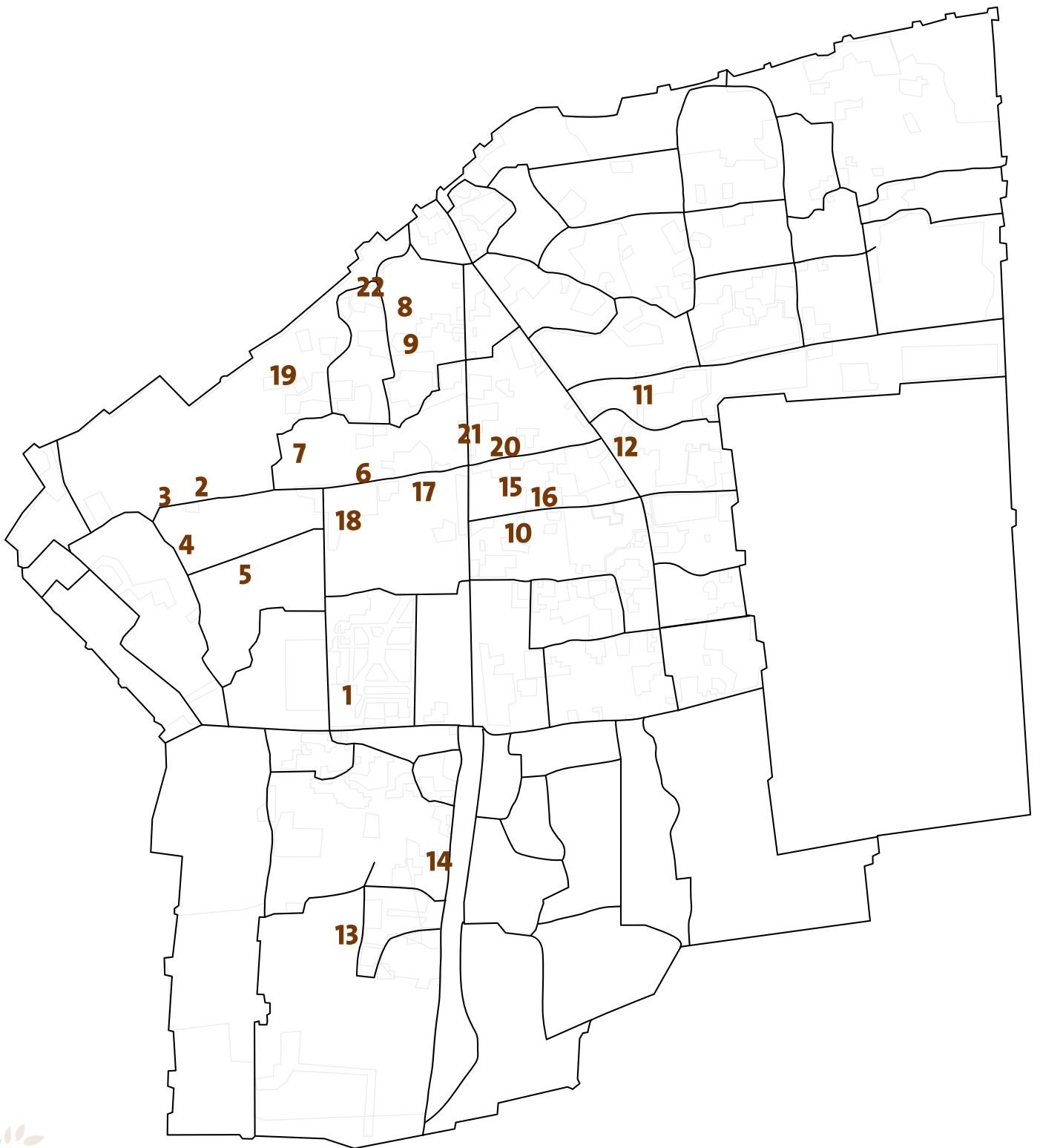
Palestinian Christians are called “Living Stones” according to the Bible in the First Epistle of Peter . This is because they have lived in Jerusalem for centuries and have played a major role in preserving the Christian identity in the city. This information sheet provides a profile of the Palestinian Christian community’s residences that can be used in advocacy and awareness-raising work. This shall show that Christianity in Jerusalem is not just about the holy places, but also about the living community that are part of the Palestinian people who are trying to stay strong against the Israeli occupation’s agenda that aims to undermine their presence in the city. Therefore, in order to prevent a further declining of the Christian presence in the city of Jerusalem, several recommendations and solutions should be implemented by the local and international churches and national organisations, and the local Palestinian community and its authorities:

1. Practical solutions need to be identified so that they can be implemented by local Christian communities, Churches, and related organisations, to develop concrete strategic planning projects and programmes in order to preserve the Christian population of Jerusalem. The objective is to analyse Christians’ problems regarding threats to their future presence in the Holy Land, particularly in Jerusalem.
2. Concrete and scientific analysis should be undertaken of all the religious, social, cultural, economic, and political issues that are considered strategic to the Christian community, especially those living in Jerusalem.
3. An awareness and advocacy plan should be developed among the Palestinian community and its institutions, the international community, and churches, regarding the defacement of the Christian identity and the danger of the Palestinian Christian community disappearing from Jerusalem.





IV. MAP: PALESTINIAN CHRISTIAN RESIDENTIAL UNITS IN THE OCCUPIED OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM



### **Monastery Residential Compound**

1. Saint John the Beheaded Monastery and Residential Compound
2. Saint Michael and St. Gabriel Monastery and Residential Compound
3. Saint George Monastery and Residential Compound
4. Saint Theodorus Monastery and Residential compound
5. Saint Nicholas Monastery and Residential compound
6. Saint Charalambos Monastery & residential compound
7. Saint Catherine Monastery & residential compound
8. Saint Euthymius (Aftimos) Monastery & Residential Compound
9. Saint Spyridon Monastery & residential compound
10. Saint Panaghia Monastery & residential compound
11. Saint Nicodemus Monastery & residential compound
12. Armenian Catholic Patriarchate residential compound
13. Armenian Orthodox Patriarchate residential compound
14. Saint George Monastery and Residential Compound (Armenian Quarter)

### **Christian Residential Compound**

15. Dar Al- Consul Residential compound
16. Musa Affandi residential compound
17. Dar Ishak Beik residential compound
18. Al-Masbaneh residential compound
19. Al-saha Residential Compound
20. Dar Rabaah Residential Compound
21. Dar Al-Kbeereh Residential Compound
22. Al- Lukanda Residential Compound





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