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DISSEMINATION BY THE LIVINGSTON GROUP, LLC

FARA Registration #6344

We write to you regarding an issue that threatens the enduring presence of Christianity in the Holy Land.

As of today, several municipalities in Israel have initiated legal proceedings against the Christian Churches in Israel for millions in municipal taxes. These proceedings are contrary to the status quo and to historical and contemporary agreements that provide the Christian Churches in Israel with a special legal and tax status. The number and potential magnitude of the proceedings are an unprecedented escalation against the small population of nearly 2 percent of Christians and the greater Christian presence in Israel.

The status allows the Christian Churches in Israel to invest in and serve the local Christian and broader communities through churches, eldercare, hospitals, schools, and more. Without the exemptions, these social services and the people they serve are gravely compromised. Further, it allows for the Christian Churches in Israel to care for the many Holy sites in Israel that are offered, with few exceptions, free of charge to pilgrims.

In 2018, direct engagement by the US Government, other governments, and religious leaders with the Government of Israel helped encourage Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to intervene to suspend adverse legislation and to suspend the threat of municipal taxes in Jerusalem. The Prime Minister also established a special committee headed by then Minister of Regional Cooperation Tzachi Hanegbi to formulate a sustainable resolution. The committee, however, did not progress.

We urge the US Government to work with the Government of Israel, as before, to resolve this issue now and in the long-term. The enduring presence of Christianity in Israel has long been a priority of the Government of Israel and significant to the millions of Christian pilgrims that visit annually from the United States and around the world during times of peace.

Thank you for your consideration.