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ASIA/HOLY LAND - "Temporary" occupation of a Christian hermitage by Jewish settlers

Taybeh (Agenzia Fides) - A small hermitage with a chapel, built on a plot of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, near the town of Taybeh (30 kilometers north-east of Jerusalem), has been the scene in recent days of a brief occupation by some Jewish settlers, probably from the nearby settlement of Ofra. The incident occurred on Friday, April 19. The settlers were temporarily settled in the hermitage, unattended for about a year - after it was built and inhabited by a Greek-Catholic monk - and hoisted the flag of Israel. The initiative resulted in the intervention of some young Christians and Muslims of the area, who expressed their opposition to the occupation on behalf of the settlers, who moved away.
On Saturday, April 20 Bishop William Shomali, Patriarchal Vicar of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, visited the site along with the Christian mayor of Taybeh and the Muslim mayor of the nearby village of Deir Jarir to hear directly from the witnesses the findings of facts and to express the concern of the Church for the people of the area. "I went to tell the people that we protect our Holy Places, and we do not allow others to come and occupy lands, homes and places of worship where we have been for years and centuries," says to Fides Msg. Shomali. "It was more like a demonstrative act, put in place to see what reactions it would have caused. Maybe someone forgets " continues the Patriarchal Vicar "that the law of the State of Israel considers occupations of land and property of others illegal." (GV) (Agenzia Fides 22/04/2013).

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