

October 4th, 2023

To
Members of The Israel Incoming Tour Operators Association

Dear IITOA Members,

RE: Update on IITOA Efforts to Address Inappropriate Conduct Towards Tourists

We are pleased to report significant progress in addressing the issue of inappropriate conduct towards tourists, a concern primarily manifesting in Jerusalem's Old City. Following diligent efforts and focused initiatives by IITOA board, the issue has garnered public attention and subsequently instigated governmental action.

It is hereby explicitly clarified that the instances in question do not pertain to physical abuse but rather isolated incidents where tourists have been poorly mistreated, primarily within the Old City of Jerusalem, as aforementioned. While the vast majority of tourists visiting Israel are treated respectfully, and such incidents are relatively rare, IITOA remains committed to ensuring a wholly positive experience for all tourists and that they return to their countries of origin satisfied and unaffected by detrimental conduct that tarnishes the reputation and the great experience of visiting Israel.

The recent surge of incidents is partly attributable to the high density of crowds in Jerusalem, owing to religious festivities observed by both Jewish and Christian communities.

We are no longer satisfied with mere verbal condemnations and, in alignment with commitments made by the local authorities, the police and the Ministry of Tourism, we steadfastly advocate in demanding resolute action against individuals perpetrating such misconduct who bear no connection to the principles of Judaism.

We commend the prompt response from high-ranking state officials, including the Minister of Tourism, the Prime Minister, the President, and the Chief Rabbi, all of whom have unequivocally, publicly condemned such actions and have vowed to act decisively to eliminate this disconcerting phenomenon.

Community leaders and residents of Jerusalem are also proactively working to ensure the well-being of tourists and to maintain the city's esteemed reputation.

Israel holds a solemn duty to safeguard its holy sites, and, as reiterated by both the Prime Minister and the President of Israel, shall not tolerate even marginal occurrences of such misconduct.

Israel Incoming Tour Operators Association is unwavering in its commitment to a zero-tolerance policy towards any form of misbehavior, aiming to ensure the utmost satisfaction, safety, and well-being of all tourists.

We remain at your disposal for any further inquiries and information.

Sincerely,

Lior Gelfand – **Chairman**

Yossi Fatael - **Managing Director**

