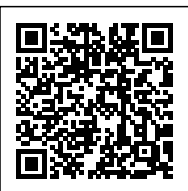


# ACTIVE PURSUIT OF PEACE KEY FOR SYRIAN ARMENIANS

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Doctor Armen Baghdoyan, Watertown MA, 28 December 2011

✘ Let us first understand the important premises of the condition of the Armenian community in Syria:

1. Without being experts on the formation of the community, we can state with absolute certainty that the existence of the Syrian Armenian community predates the Turkish genocide of the Armenians in Turkey.
2. Deportees from Turkey essentially established the burgeoned communities in Syria as well as in Lebanon.
3. At a time when the total Syrian population numbered no more than 5-6 million, the Armenian communities in Syria numbered almost 200,000--mainly resident in Aleppo, but significant communities living also in the major cities and many small towns from Damascus to Kamishli.
4. The Armenians enjoyed full privileges of the Syrian citizenship everywhere. They were recognized by the state as a minority and given full rights to build and operate their own churches and community schools wherever they could with no restrictions.
5. Living in a fundamentally Moslem country, the Christian Armenians--like people of other religions--never faced discrimination in their economic endeavors or social activities.

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Summing up the five points above, we can state that Syrian Armenians, with no exception, are strongly attached to Syria as their own country and homeland, with profound feelings of love and devotion equaled only by those reserved for their ancestral lands.

The Armenian community has lived happily in Syria feeling the utmost safety and security for decades under many administrations.

That is, until a historic calamity struck the Arab lands: Israel was created.

The Palestinian problem and Western conspiratorial maneuvers shook the foundations of Arab economies and societies. The inevitable political confusion hit the minorities especially hard. Disorientation approaching illogical panic seeped into Christian minorities. The constant Israeli threats and the unrelenting Western policy of keeping the Arab countries undeveloped and under continued imperial yoke wreaked havoc throughout the Arab lands. Unceasing enmity and illegal sanctions hampered normal economic development. Consequently, lack of economic opportunities and the paucity of high-end jobs opened the gates of emigration for skilled people to more advanced countries in the West. Once cohesive and vibrant communities felt the pressure of disintegration and large segments of communities dispersed. These are the major reasons why the Armenian communities of Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq (lately), Iran, in fact of the whole Middle East were infected by the debilitating viruses of dissolution.

Currently another major blow hatched in Israel and the West threatens the stability of the region.

The question is: What can the Syrian Armenians do to prevail over this cabalist assault on the sovereignty of their country?

I believe the Armenian community should take its cue from the five points outlined above.

The community must design a strategy based on the following convictions and considerations:

1. Armenians are citizens of Syria. They are as patriotic as any other Syrian.
2. Armenians are proponents of a peaceful solution to the political problem rocking the country.
3. The only acceptable way out of the conflict is dialogue between the opposing parties.
4. Any outside meddling into the Syrian internal affairs leads to the deterioration of the situation and cannot be conducive to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. All Syrians should condemn interference by any outside power with no equivocation. This problem concerns the sovereign state of Syria and Syrian nationals are fully capable of solving it peacefully.
- 5.. An eventual civil war as a goal instigated by some outside parties would be a colossal calamity for all the people of Syria and should be condemned by every patriotic Syrian.

6. Armenians should not panic beyond reason. They should express their dedication to the territorial integrity of Syria and social stability in their country as forcefully as they can.

7. Armenians should assume an active part in the process and work with other interested parties to make Syria a better place to live for all Syrians.

I hate to inject an obvious truth here, but I will. Syria and Lebanon are the irreplaceable anchors of the Armenian Diaspora. The preservation of the Syrian and Lebanese Armenian communities is a vital responsibility for every Armenian. Can anyone think about an Armenian Diaspora if instability grips the Middle East?

The Syrian crisis puts the Armenian communities everywhere face-to-face with the threat of irrelevance.

We need to act accordingly, with conviction and courage.

