ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH OF SWITZERLAND PETITION

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Category: Opinions

23 June 2011
Summary

We, the undersigned, petition His Holiness Karekin II to reverse current policies that pertain to the centralization of control and unilateral decision making of local church matters. We ask that the traditional democratic principles of our Armenian Apostolic Church be restored and preserved. This request includes: renewing respect towards and adherence to the principle of separating spiritual matters (responsibility of clergy) from structural, financial, administrative, and legal matters (managed by laity); establishing a constructive practice of dialogue with our communities and all believers therein; and listening to our faithful in their wish to choose their own church status and priest.

The Petition is now closed

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Open Petition to HH Karekin II:

On Friday, 3 June 2011, the website of the Holy See of Etchmiadzin announced that Fr. Abel Manoukian, the respected (and legally sanctioned) priest of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Switzerland for the past 16 years, has been defrocked by Yourself for "disobedience". This has been due allegedly to his:

- "Not accepting a Diocese in Switzerland

- Not accepting the *locum tenens* as head of Switzerland Diocese and as designated priest of St. Hagop church in Troinex (by Your Holiness);
- Not travelling to the Holy See of Etchmiadzin as and when ordered."

We the undersigned, faithful members of the Armenian Apostolic Church, members of the general ecclesial community worldwide, and Armenians of all backgrounds and citizenships throughout the world, stand by the following points:

We deplore the "patriarchal order" to defrock a priest on the above (erroneous) grounds and deem it unacceptable and unwarranted since we see no evidence or basis for it under our commonly-accepted canonical laws and traditions.

We declare that unilaterally deciding and forcing Switzerland to become a Diocese to be against the explicit wishes of the majority of Apostolic faithful in Switzerland. This is not acceptable. We remind all concerned that the General Assembly of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Switzerland has never approved a Diocese in Switzerland.

We remind his Holiness that it is neither for a priest, nor for a Church Council to reject or accept a Diocese; it is solely and wholly the prerogative of Armenian communities to discuss, accept and support one.

We consider the Holy See of Etchmiadzin as an important and revered spiritual center. We have been and will continue being connected to it. We are thus in full support of the Holy See of Etchmiadzin as an institution and we hope that it is governed transparently and with respect to those it serves.

We conclude that the current situation/atmosphere is leading to division and destabilization within our communities, which only benefits a small minority and negatively impacts our nation as a whole.

We adhere to the traditional democratic principles that are at the foundations of our Apostolic Church as established by the first effective National Ecclesiastical Assemblies held in the 5th century, and respect Christian values and behavior; we choose to express our views openly and in a transparent manner.

We petition the Holy See of Etchmiadzin:

1. **to listen to our faithful** in their wish to choose their own priest.

2. **to preserve our traditional rights** and democratic principles in separating spiritual matters (responsibility of clergy) from structural, financial, administrative, and legal matters (managed by laymen).

3. **to reverse its current policies and alter its strategy** so as to establish constructive dialogue with Armenian communities and all believers therein; we ask for a focus on **spiritual and religious** matters, and a demonstrable commitment towards being a positive force in uniting our communities rather than acting as a force of dissolution and fragmentation.

We are firm in our collective determination to support the principles of a democratic, transparent Armenian Apostolic Church.

We, the undersigned, agree and support this petition, and we invite our compatriots in all communities to join us.