

PATRIARCHATE PAIR PERSISTS

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Category: [Opinions](#)



By Hagop Hagopian, Ontario, 9 October 2021

Back in July, when Patriarch Nourhan and Fr. Baret illegally approved the 99-year hotel lease for Jerusalem's Goveroun Bardez, they must have assumed that they would get away with their plan without anyone getting wiser. Besides, a mourning Armenian nation, which was focused on Artsakh War losses, would not notice their deed.

But since then (after Keghart.org [exposed](#) the illegal lease), the Dynamic Duo's plan has made headlines around the world. In addition to the coverage in the Armenian media (*USA Armenian Life*, Harut Sassounian, *Azad Khosk*, *AM News*, *Armenian News*, *Armenian Observer*, *Jamanak*, *Arevelk*, *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, etc.), the secret transaction was reported by *RamallahMix*, *AmmanNet*, *Arab News*, *Al-Monitor*, *Al-Mayadeen*, and the *Petra* news agency of Jordan).

On Oct. 8, Dr. Ramzi Khouri, president of Highest Presidential Committee of Church Affairs of Palestinian Authority (PA), met Garen Nazarian (Armenia's ambassador to the Vatican) in Rome and issued a joint statement which stressed the "importance of working jointly to enhance the presence of the Palestinian Armenian parish..." and the role of Armenia and the Diaspora to "strengthen this inherent presence in front of the challenges to the Judaization of the city of Jerusalem, including the historic Armenian neighborhood and attempts to change its features."

In an Oct. 9 article headlined "Jerusalem's Armenian Patriarch has Illegally Leased Land to a Jewish Businessman", [Lragir of Yerevan](#) said the "scandal has echoed in Armenia and in various Diaspora institutions." The report added that the long lease had been granted through the minority vote of the Patriarchate's Holy Synod while the contract remained secret. The Yerevan publication added, "according to the Patriarchate's constitution, no land can be leased for more than 25 years without the approval of the Sts. James Brotherhood and the Holy Synod."

Earlier on, Dr. Khouri had written to the Patriarchate complaining about the latter's decision but had not received a reply for a long time. The PA committee had then written to Catholicos Karekin II, calling the transaction a violation of international law since the "area inside the Old City of Jerusalem is an integral part of the Palestinian occupied territories governed by relevant international resolutions." Armenia's foreign ministry and the Diaspora High Commissioner were urged to intervene. Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safedi met with Armenia's Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan in New York and urged Armenia to intervene to "protect the properties of the Armenian Church in the Old City and to stop any act that can affect its legal and historic status." The Ramgavar party, headed by Mike Kharabian, sent a letter to Armenia's president asking him to intervene.

In a [letter](#) to the PA, Karnik Sarkissian, chairman of the Council of Western Armenians, wrote : "We are closely following the developments related to the Armenian Patriarchate's behavior in regard to the Patriarchate's properties in Jerusalem. We are cognizant of the level of corruption and moral degradation behind these practices. They are not only harmful to the Armenian community but damage the brotherly relations between Armenians and Palestinians..."

"The Armenian community of Palestine and the Armenian nation condemn the abusive practices of the corrupt clique which controls the decisions of the Armenian Patriarchate not only because they violate the Patriarchate's internal regulations but also because they have reached a point of conspiracy against the sovereignty of Jerusalem and Palestinian rights, ignoring relevant international laws which relate to Jerusalem's status..."

While the anti-Nourhan/Baret storm picked up strength, a petulant Fr. Yeretsian replied to PA's church affairs committee with a cantankerous letter. He said: "We cannot help suspecting that criticism against us is aimed to undermine and weaken the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, in favour of your religious leadership..."

"The Armenian Patriarchate maintains its neutrality and uninvolved (stet) in political and racial matters. Please do not drag us into such disputes and do not use us in order to promote your political agenda."

Yeretsian accused the Islamic Waqf (body in charge of religious real estate) of attempts to acquire Armenian Patriarchate property, although he didn't offer evidence for his allegation. Waqf officials in Jerusalem and Amman didn't respond to the provocative accusation. They said they preferred to deal quietly with Armenian Church leadership.

Yeretsian has said the Patriarchate supported the development because vacant land is an incentive to the authorities to confiscate it. But the facts contradict Yeretsian's assertion. There already was a parking lot at Goveroun Bardez. Several months ago Byzantine remains were discovered at Goveroun Bardez. There is a seminary at the northern tip of the parcel of land. In other words, Goveroun Bardez is not vacant.



Goveroun Bardez

Yeretsian and the Patriarchate have said that as a result of the hotel agreement, Goveroun Bardez will be registered as Armenian Patriarchate property. Yes, after owning the land circa 1580, the Patriarchate will now enjoy the miraculous opportunity to register it with the municipality. The Blundering Duo congratulated itself for being responsible for the redundant registration. Yeretsian forgot that when a few years ago an Arab family ridiculously claimed to own Goveroun Bardez, the Patriarchate won the case. As well, when the municipality proposed to convert part of Goveroun Bardez to public park, the Patriarchate refused the proposal at that time. In other words, no one can expropriate Goveroun Bardez which is part of the Armenian Quarter compound.

In late September the Patriarchate released a statement signed by the Synod head saying the Synod backed the hotel transaction. There is one thing wrong with that statement: the Synod can't vote on such transactions. According to the Sts. James Brotherhood constitution, only the General Assembly (*Untanoor Joghov*) can approve such transactions.

Synod members who approved the transaction were the Patriarch, Yeretsian (who is not allowed to vote because of conflict of interest), doddering and almost-deaf Archbishop Sevan Gharibian, and Fr. Samuel Aghoyan, also known as "Yeretsian's Yes Man."

The exchange between PA and Fr. Yeretsian and the latter's accusation of PA and Jerusalem Muslim religious leaders, could damage the traditionally good relations between Armenians and Arabs in the Holy Land and in neighboring Arab countries.

Decades ago there was Jerusalem's lawless Patriarch Yeghishhe Derderian and his squire Archbishop Shahe Ajemian. Now there's Patriarch Nourhan Manougian and Fr. Baret Yerestian.

What does the hotel scandal boil down to? The isolated clergy duo vs. the Armenian nation, the Armenian Church, the Palestinian Authority, Palestinians, Jordan, the Waqf, and the Arab street. That the duo's blunder also endangers the Armenians of the Middle East is apparently neither here nor there for the two clergymen.

KEGHART

We suggest readers to participate in the petition [Save the Lands](#)

المجلس الوطني لأرمن أرمينيا الغربية

السيد الدكتور رمزي خوري المحترم

إلى رئيس اللجنة الرئاسية العليا لمتابعة شؤون الكنائس في فلسطين

السيد الدكتور رمزي خوري المحترم

تحية طيبة وبعد

تتابع الهيئة التأسيسية للمجلس الوطني الأعلى لأرمينيا الغربية عن كتب التطورات المتعلقة بتصرفات بطريركية الأرمن الأورثوذكس في القدس القديمة بخصوص ممتلكات وقف البطريركية.

نحن على دراية تامة أن الفساد والإنحطاط الأخلاقي الكامن خلف تلك الممارسات لا تضر فقط بالجالية الأرمنية في القدس، بل أيضاً تلحق أضراراً جسيمة بالعلاقة الأرمنية الفلسطينية الأخوية والتي تعود جذورها إلى ما قبل القرن الرابع الميلادي.

لقد كان البطريرك أبراهام، رسول الجالية الأرمنية في القدس في النصف الأول من القرن السابع، الذي زار رسول الإسلام النبي محمد (صلعم) للإطمئنان منه على مصير الأرمن في البلدان التي شملتها الفتوحات الإسلامية، وهو من إستلم منه "المنشور الأعظم" الذي بموجبه أوصى رسول الإسلام بحماية الهوية القومية للأرمن وحقهم في الملك والعبادة.

إن علاقة الحرص المتبادل للمصالح العليا بين الشعبية الأرمني والفلسطيني خصوصاً، والعربي عموماً، هو نهج متأصل بين الأمتين إستمر قرون من الزمن دون إهتزاز. وأن الممارسات الفردية الشاذة التي تصدر بين حين وآخر لا ولن تغير في حقيقة تلاحم الشعبين الأرمني والفلسطيني، خاصة وأنهما في نفس خندق الكفاح التحرري الوطني.

تستنكر الجالية الأرمنية في فلسطين، والشعب الأرمني برمته، الممارسات المسيئة للزمرة الفاسدة المسيطرة على قرارات البطريركية الأرمنية الأورثوذكسية في القدس، ليس فقط لمخالفتها النظم والقوانين الداخلية للبطريركية، بل لأنها تمادت إلى درجة التآمر على سيادة القدس والحقوق الفلسطينية، ضاربة عرض الحائط بكل القوانين الدولية المتعلقة بالوضع القانوني لمدينة القدس وغيرها.

إن السلطة الفلسطينية بصلاحياتها المشروعة، قادرة على ضبط هذه الممارسات اللاقانونية بالطرق التي تضمن صيانة العلاقة المميزة بين الشعبين الأرمني والفلسطيني. ونحن على ثقة بأن السلطة الفلسطينية بحكمتها المعهودة ستعيد الأمور إلى نصابها.

القانوني.

مع جزيل التقدير والإحترام

المهندس كارنيك سركيسيان

رئيس الهيئة التأسيسية للمجلس الوطني الأعلى لأرمينيا الغربية

أكتوبر 1, 2021

Comments



H – 2021-10-14 17:35:55

Armenag Derderian, Before the Patriarch and Yeretsian resign and leave the Convent, they should cancel the so called "lease agreement".



Hayorti – 2021-10-13 12:08:03

Shake (if that's your name), when you don't use your last name (let's put aside the possibility that your first name is not Shake), you lose the right to demand to know another commenter's real name. Had you read my comment, you would have seen the phrase where I said that I wondered if there's another explanation for the inexplicable misdeeds of the Patriarch and Fr. Yeretsian. It's logical speculation and not gossip. I see you have adopted the tired Zionist tactic of calling 'racist' anyone who dares criticize the terrorist/racist/colonialist Israeli regime whose murderous hands now extend to the southern Caucasus where it was accessory to the murder of more than 4,000 Armenian soldiers. The way you express yourself makes me wonder whether you would call "antisemitic" a football team that beats an Israeli team.



Shake – 2021-10-13 04:44:22

All scandalous gossip and slander! "Hayorti" or whatever your name, this is also antisemitism.



Hayorti – 2021-10-10 08:33:16

I have read your coverage of the Jerusalem Patriarchate's land deal scandal. Thank you. I find the Patriarch's and Father Baret Yeretsian's lease decision so bizarre, absurd, ignorant, and manifestly treacherous that I wonder whether there is a secret motive behind their decision. Since 1967, when it illegally occupied Arab Jerusalem, Israel has devised all types of ploys to grab Jerusalem real estate that belong to the Armenian Patriarchate and to other non-Jewish groups and individuals. It's called Judaization. Let's try this speculation for size: Israeli secret operatives could have threatened the Patriarch and Father Yeretsian that unless they signed the Goveroun Bardez deal, someone will release compromising facts about them. The Mossad and the Shin Bet monitor all communication (telephone, mail, photographic, and the Internet). It wouldn't surprise me if they had thick files on the Patriarch and Yeretsian. The latter, in particular, has had an "interesting" 27-year career in North America. Israel has Armenian spies (recruited under duress) to stay on top of Jerusalem Armenians' affairs.



Mdahok Saghimahay – 2021-10-10 07:43:07

Join us on Saturday, 16th of October at 3:30pm in front of the Goveroun Bardez to protest against the 99 years leasing contract. Time has come to fight against this decision!



Armenag Derderian – 2021-10-10 06:02:07

Նուրիան հրաժարիր: