



March 21, 2023

Statement of Condemnation of Attacks on Armenian-Christians in Jerusalem



The Armenian Bar Association expresses its deep dismay and denunciation of recent violent and hateful incidents directed against the Armenian-Christian community in the Holy City of Jerusalem. We know all too well how the failure to condemn acts of hate leads assuredly to their repetition. Actions and aggressions that seek to curtail religious freedom or persecute people because of their ethnicity or religion require forceful, opposition and censure.

Armenians, the first nation in the world to adopt Christianity, have maintained a constant presence in Jerusalem for over 2000 years. The Armenian Quarter is one of the four pillars of the Old City of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is a sacred city to many religions, including the Armenian Christians, and the city has been known as the bastion of tolerance and mutual respect.

The rich and diverse cultural and religious history of the city and that community is one of the reasons that the Armenian Bar Association will hold its Midyear Meeting in the Holy City of Jerusalem in June 2023. As we prepare to go to Jerusalem, we are alarmed to see reports in recent months of members of the Armenian community, including the clergy, subjected to escalating hate crimes.¹

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<https://www.ipost.com/christianworld/article-731773>

In November 2022, soldiers from the Israel Defense Forces Givati Brigade were accused of spitting toward the Armenian archbishop, priests and pilgrims during a procession in the Old City to mark the Feast of the Cross.² In January 2023, graffiti in Hebrew scrawled on the walls of the Armenian monastery in the Old City called for “Death to Christians,” “Death to Arabs,” “Death to Armenians” and “Revenge.”³ The graffiti followed the desecration of a nearby Christian cemetery.⁴

On January 27, 2023, a group of extremists attacked an Armenian owned restaurant (Taboon Wine Bar) near the New Gate in the Christian Quarter.⁵ Video footage shows the attackers hurling tables and chairs at the restaurant patrons.⁶ That same weekend, on January 28, 2023, a group armed with sticks and gas canisters tried to obstruct traffic on the street where the Armenian Patriarchate is located and some attempted to climb on the roof of the Patriarchate to remove the Patriarchate’s cross-bearing Christian flag.⁷ An argument ensued and a young Armenian man was attacked, beaten and then taken into custody because the extremists falsely claimed to the police that the handful of Armenians, who were trying to protect their sacred sites of worship from desecration and commercial establishments from destruction, were terrorists! This is, in the cautionary words of United States Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, akin to “shouting fire in a crowded theater.” Church leaders of the Holy Land have condemned these attacks, and so do we.

Simply put, these anti-Armenian incidents are motivated by hate and religious intolerance and they are unacceptable.

We call on organizations in Israel, the United States and around the world to join us in denouncing these acts of hate, in calling for full investigations of these incidents, and in working to promote peace, tolerance and respect.

We will be discussing these issues with the local community in Jerusalem during our visit in June, 2023.

² <https://www.timesofisrael.com/givati-soldiers-accused-of-spitting-at-armenian-archbishop-in-jerusalem-procession/>

³ https://allisrael.com/jerusalem-christians-on-edge-after-death-to-christians-arabs-armenians-scrawled-on-old-city-walls?fbclid=IwAR0IbVbuyDLC7i3-HoAVcqfYmNa_yfdiAAF8D-e9NhIPO-AQF-WEMNT92D8 ; <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230113-jewish-extremists-write-hate-slogans-on-church-wall-in-jerusalem/>

⁴ <https://allisrael.com/desecration-at-christian-cemetery-in-jerusalem-30-graves-vandalized>

⁵ <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230128-israel-settlers-attack-armenian-restaurant-in-jerusalem/>

⁶ <https://youtu.be/ItCtUyZYE0w>

⁷ <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230130-israel-extremists-attack-armenian-patriarchate-in-jerusalem/>