



UNITED NATIONS CONCILIATION COMMISSION FOR PALESTINE  
COMMITTEE ON JERUSALEM

Summary Record of meetings between the Committee  
and the Latin, Armenian and Greek Orthodox Patriarchs of Jerusalem  
(Seventeenth Meeting of the Committee)

held in the Old City, Jerusalem on 6 April 1949

Present:	Mr. Benoist	(France)	Chairman
	Mr. Haldeman	(U.S.A.)	
	Dr. Serup		Legal Adviser, Secretariat
	H.E. Monsignor Gustavo Testa		Apostolic Delegate and Regent of the Latin Patriarch
	His Beatitude Guregh II		Armenian Patriarch
	His Lordship Archbishop Athinagoras		Representative of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch

Conversation with the Latin Patriarch

The CHAIRMAN apologized for the absence of the Turkish member of the Committee and explained that in the first place the Committee had wished to pay a formal call on the Patriarch and in the second place to hear his views on Jerusalem and the Holy Places. The Committee wished to know in particular whether the Patriarch desired to add anything to the statement submitted two years ago to the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine by the heads of different Catholic rites. The PATRIARCH indicated that he was following the instructions of the Holy Father in regard to the internationalisation of Jerusalem and that security and freedom of access were an absolute necessity for this purpose.

The CHAIRMAN drew the attention of the Patriarch to the establishment of a Special Committee composed of two Jews and two Transjordanians whose work would be parallel to that of the Jerusalem Committee of the Conciliation Commission. He inquired whether the Patriarch would be prepared to make a more detailed statement on Jerusalem and the Holy Places than the one contained in the Papal Encyclical.

The PATRIARCH reiterated that freedom of access to the Holy Places, security of the Christians and guarantees for their property were the conditions he considered as essential for the welfare of Jerusalem. He added that satisfactory provisions for the security of the Arab section of Jerusalem had been made by the Military Governor, Colonel Abdullah, El Tell. He asked the Committee whether it would not be possible now that the Israeli-Transjordan Armistice Agreement had been signed, to open the Jaffa Gate as well as the road to Bethlehem. Finally, he expressed his doubts about the possibility of solving the Jerusalem problem this year. The CHAIRMAN replied that in his opinion the Jaffa Gate and the road could be opened. As to the Jerusalem problem, it was very complicated as it had to be solved in accordance with the United Nations decision and in conformity with the desires of the Jews, Arabs and the people of Jerusalem. A project which would be adopted hastily and would not satisfy the various parties would not be durable.

Discussing the different concepts of an international regime for Jerusalem, the PATRIARCH mentioned an example of Saarbrücken; which had its own administrative machinery and police.

The CHAIRMAN considered that Trieste afforded a better basis of comparison since there, as in Jerusalem, two nations confronted each other.

The PATRIARCH asked whether the boundaries of the territory to be nationalized were already settled and upon receiving an affirmative answer, inquired about the status of Nazareth, Tiberias and Capernaum. He hoped that freedom and security would also prevail in the Holy Places.

The CHAIRMAN replied that under the terms the [United Nations resolution](#), the Governments which would govern the territory in which these Holy Places were located, would provide free access to them. However, they were not to be placed under an international regime.

The PATRIARCH then inquired what would be the attitude of the Jews if the Conciliation Commission should impose religious freedom? Would this be the same freedom as the Church enjoyed at the time of the Mandate or a freedom according to Jewish conceptions? The word "freedom" had different meanings according to the place, where it was uttered. He further inquired whether the authority and the rights and privileges of the Church which it had acquired during the Ottoman and British Administrations would be maintained.

The CHAIRMAN explained that he hoped that they would be maintained but that the United Nations could not impose their acceptance on Israel which would have to accept these rights and privileges freely. The United Nations had preserved Jerusalem and Bethlehem which were especially cherished by the Christian faith. In conclusion, he summed up the wishes of the Patriarch concerning the freedom of Christian institutions in Galilee, Nazareth, Tiberias, Capernaum and Jaffa. He added that the Committee was anxious to visit the Christian Holy Places in Galilee in order to learn whether any complaints were forthcoming from Christian communities there.

The PATRIARCH explained that his remarks had referred to the *de facto* situations. As regards the *de jure* situation, he hoped the United Nations would obtain guarantees securing to the Catholic Church the same freedom, rights and privileges as it had employed during the Mandate.

II Conversation with the Armenian Patriarch

The PATRIARCH opened the conversation with a detailed account of the historical relationship between the Armenians and the people of Palestine. In reply to a

question from the Chairman in regard to his wishes concerning the interest of the Armenian Church, the Patriarch said that the present situation in Arab held territory was, generally speaking, satisfactory, but that he was anxious to know what had happened to the property of the Armenian Church the following places:

In Jerusalem:

(1) The Monastery erected on the site of the House of Annas (close to the German Church of Dormition). It had been bombarded, the four inmates removed, one of whom was shot and the others wounded. The Jews had first arrested and then released them. The dead, however, remained unburied. This site was particularly important to the Armenian Church as it was the only cemetery of all the Armenian Patriarch. It was furthermore recognized as a Holy Place.

(2) The extensive land property behind Barclays Bank, on which shops had been erected and then rented to Jews.

In Jaffa:

(3) The Armenian Church, Monastery and School, as well as other property.

In Haifa:

(4) Certain property.

In Ramleh:

(5) A Monastery.

He expressed the wish to see the fifth century Mosaic outside the Damascus Gate, as it was the property of the Armenian Church.

The Patriarch added that the Armenians had suffered considerable losses due to the events in Jaffa and Haifa. He asked that the Armenians be allowed to return to Haifa, Jaffa and Ramleh. They had numbered 10,000 at the time, of the partition.

Asked by the Chairman whether the Armenian Church was interested in Galilee, the PATRIARCH replied that it had an interest: in all Holy Places in Palestine and that a memorandum to that effect had been submitted to the United Nations Committee on Palestine.

Summarizing, he requested —

(1) that adequate provisions be included in the future constitution to safeguard the interests of the Christians as a whole, and in particular the rights and privileges of the different confessions which had been attained through efforts and sacrifices during many centuries. The Status Quo should be respected.

(2) that the Christian should be allowed to go back to the Holy Places.

He added that if the partition plan were to be accepted, the Jerusalem problem would be solved. But, if it should not be accepted, then the whole problem would have to be revised. He drew the attention of the Committee to the last part of the memorandum submitted by the Armenian Patriarchate to the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine. In conclusion, the Patriarch stressed that he had tried to have Jerusalem declared an open city, but, unfortunately, his attempts had failed.

During the hostilities, the Patriarchate had been under fire for several days but he had advised the Armenian population of Jerusalem, 3,000, not to evacuate the city.

### III Conversation with Archbishop Athinagoras, Representative of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem

The ARCHBISHOP declared that the Greek Orthodox Church of Jerusalem fully accepted the internationalisation of the City as decided by the United Nations. The Greek Orthodox Church was interested in:

(1) the maintenance of the Status Quo for all Holy Places as well as free access to them;

(2) the maintenance of rights and privileges of the Christian Church as confirmed by international treaties or by practice.

In this connection, the Archbishop emphasised that the Greek Orthodox Church would desire that provisions be included in the international treaties to be concluded by the States in Palestine, guaranteeing the rights and privileges of the Christian Church.

The CHAIRMAN replied that the Committee agreed to the Status Quo in Jerusalem but that it was also concerned with the other Holy Places such as Nazareth and Capernaum. He indicated that the Committee could only ask Transjordan and Israel to grant to all priests and pilgrims the freedom they enjoyed at the time of the Mandate and asked whether this would satisfy the Greek.

The ARCHBISHOP replied in the affirmative, but added that the property of the Church as well as its privileges should be protected. In particular, he mentioned that property should not be alienated and that privileges in matters of taxation as well as exemption of customs duties, etc, should be maintained.

The CHAIRMAN inquired about the status of the property belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church.

The ARCHBISHOP explained that the Patriarch of Moscow had sent Archimandrite Leonidas as his representative to Palestine. The representative had not, however, yet visited the Old City for the purpose of presenting his letters of credential.

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