



EUROPEAN ARMENIAN FEDERATION FOR JUSTICE & DEMOCRACY

To: Head of the Mission of Israel to the EU and NATO
Ambassador H.E. Mr. Haim Regev

Subject: The Armenian quarter of Jerusalem

Honorable Ambassador,
Dear Mr. Regev,

On behalf of the EAFJD – a pan-European grassroots organization, I would like to draw your attention to the dangerous developments in Jerusalem which risk destroying one of the historic quarters of the city, namely the Armenian quarter.

The Armenian presence in Jerusalem dates to the 4th century but today it is facing an existential threat.¹ Unfortunately, the Armenian quarter (which makes up one-sixth of the city of Jerusalem and has a history of 1600 years) and its inhabitants have been a target of attack and harassment by extremists and businessmen, seeking to appropriate the land. In the meanwhile, one has witnessed inactivity of the Israeli police or intimidation of the Armenian residents.

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention has published two statements² since December 2023, condemning the aggression against the Armenian quarter and urging the Israeli authorities to undertake the necessary measures to safeguard the Armenian quarter from the developers and the armed settlers who are enabling them. As stated by the Institute “the most recent incidence of violence occurred on December 28, 2023, when an armed mob of about thirty people associated with Israeli-Australian businessman Danny Rubenstein attacked the historical area called the “Cows’ Garden”, injuring several Armenians, including a priest and students of the Theological Seminary. According to the local activists, two Armenian residents were arrested by Israeli police while none of the attackers were apprehended”.³

Local Armenians have responded to the destruction of the “Cow’s Garden” with peaceful protests in the form of public gatherings and a sit-in where construction had begun. Israeli police have met these protests with violence, using dogs and firearms to intimidate the peaceful protestors. Danny Rubenstein and George Warwar, Chairman and Director of XANA International, appear to be using force and intimidation to deter the Armenian community from

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/03/jerusalem-land-grab-armenian-community-fear-eviction-after-contentious-deal>

² <https://www.lemkininstitute.com/statements-new-page/statement-on-significance-of-the-armenian-quarter-in-east-jerusalem>

³ <https://www.lemkininstitute.com/statements-new-page/statement-on-the-attack-on-the-armenian-quarter-of-jerusalem>



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attempting to protect its land.⁴

This above-mentioned incident, together with others, occurred after a controversial land development deal was canceled by the Armenian Patriarchate in November. The deal, originally signed by the Armenian Patriarchate in July 2021, would have granted Danny Rubenstein's company, XANA, rights to build a luxury hotel on the property, destroying many historic buildings in the area. The deal was canceled after the Patriarchate faced pressure from the local Armenian community, the greater Armenian Diaspora, and Palestinian authorities. Since November, XANA has sought to claim the Cows' Garden by use of force.”⁵

As EU citizens, living across 14 European countries, we are urging you to use your leverage to call on the Israeli authorities to take appropriate action and stop these highly destructive developments in Jerusalem. The status quo of Jerusalem must be protected, and Israel should refrain from altering the demographic composition, institutional structure, and the physical, cultural and historical character of Jerusalem.

Being an ancient nation that has gone through tremendous suffering, just as Armenians, and having a vast Jewish diaspora across the world which still has to fight racial hatred, the Israeli authorities should not enable or allow it in their own country.

We do hope for your active solidarity.

Sincerely,

Kaspar Karampetian
President

⁴ <https://www.lemkininstitute.com/statements-new-page/statement-on-significance-of-the-armenian-quarter-in-east-jerusalem>

⁵ <https://www.lemkininstitute.com/statements-new-page/statement-on-the-attack-on-the-armenian-quarter-of-jerusalem>