

Archbishop Atallah Hanna: Interfaith Coalition to Protect Christians

Nov 4th 2014

Archbishop **Atallah Hanna**

Archbishop of Sebastia,

Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem

P.O. Box 14518, Jerusalem 91145

Re: interfaith Coalition to Protect Christians

Dear Bishop Hanna:

We have learned that you have sponsored the formation of an "interfaith coalition to protect Christians and other religious minorities in the Middle East." We are troubled by the fact that among the NGOs and activists invited to join the coalition are a number of Islamist and pro-Jihadi groups whose agenda has been and continues to be hostile to the freedom and survival of Christian and other minorities in the Middle East.

Among the activists you have included is Nihad Awad, the President of the Council on Islamic American Relations (CAIR), which is an un-indicted co-conspirator in the Holy Land Foundation Terrorism case and is not the civil rights organization it claims to be. For more than a decade, CAIR members and former members have been indicted, and some are serving jail sentences, for terrorism cases successfully brought against them. The Islamist organization is considered by experts as a front to the Muslim Brotherhood, which has inspired leading members of al Qaeda and ISIS (Daesh) and has been put on terror lists by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain. Several members of Congress, including the Chairman of the Homeland Security Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives, Rep. Pete King, and the Chairwoman of the subcommittee on Intelligence, Rep. Sue Myrick, have considered CAIR an extremist Islamist organization. There are bills introduced in the US House of Representatives calling for identifying the Muslim Brotherhood as a Terror organization.

CAIR has attacked Middle East Christian leaders across America, including Copts such as Dr. Shawki Karas, Lebanese Christians, as well as Iraqi and Syrian Christians while also waging smear campaigns against prominent Middle East experts for raising the issue of persecution of minorities in the Middle East. CAIR stood with the oppressive regimes against Christians and other sectors of civil societies and backed the genocidal regime of Sudan headed by the ICC indicted General Omar Bashir. CAIR backs the Muslim Brotherhood, who in Egypt has been responsible for attacks against Christian Copts and in

Libya backed the Jihadi forces responsible for violence against civilians. But even more dangerous, CAIR politically backs the Islamists and the Jihadists who in Syria and in Iraq have persecuted Christians. Some of these factions joined the Islamic State known as ISIS, which has perpetrated war crimes and crimes against Humanity in Mosul, the Nineveh Plain, and Sinjar against Christians and Yazidis.

CAIR and its executive director Nihad Awad have been notorious for suppressing educational programs, both in the public and private sectors, aimed at informing the American public about the persecution of Christian minorities in the Greater Middle East. Awad and his acolytes have politically harassed writers and intellectuals, academics who have been raising the issue of persecution of religious minorities and have become the main obstructers of truth about this persecution. In a sense, Awad and CAIR, by being supportive of the Jihadists and the Islamists and by suppressing the voices defending the persecuted Christians, actually bear some moral responsibility for the persecution and violence against Christians in the Middle East.

It would be unthinkable and unbearable for Middle East Christians and Yazidis to see a so-called interfaith Coalition presided by a Church official, partnering with haters of Middle East Christians and bigots against oppressed Middle East minorities

We therefore, as representatives of the Middle East Christian Committee MECHRIC, representing the largest coalition of Americans from Middle East Christian descent, including Copts, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syriacs, Maronites, Melkites and other groups, as well as Yazidis, ask you to remove Nihad Awad and any Islamist militant from your coalition immediately. Our communities have been offended by the presence of pro-Jihadists in a coalition claiming to help Middle East Christians and other minorities.

Sincerely,

John Hajjar, on behalf of the Middle East Christian Committee MECHRIC

Executive Committee

CC: Members of Congress (Foreign Relations and Homeland Security Committees in House and Senate)

U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

Senator Robert Menendez, Chairman,

Senator Bob Corker, Ranking

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Senator Ted Cruz

Senator John McCain

Senator Lindsey Graham

House committee on Foreign Affairs

Rep. Edward R. Royce, Chairman

Rep. Eliot L. Engel, Ranking Member

Sub-committees the Middle East and North Africa

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chairman

Rep. Theodore E. Deutch , Ranking Member

Sub-Committee on Terrorism

Rep. Ted Poe , Chairman

Rep. Brad Sherman , Ranking Member

Committee on Home land security

Rep. Michael McCaul, Chairman

Sub-committee on counter terrorism and Intelligence

Rep. Peter T. King , Chairman

—

Rep. Chris Smith

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