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## ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE

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Թուակալի  
Date

Jerusalem, 12/12/2016

To the Editorial Board of Al-Quds newspaper - Jerusalem

To be presented by hand

**Subject: News item concerning the Armenian Patriarchate land in the Al-Walaja village close to Beit Jala**

1) On its first page, Al-Quds published, on Saturday, 10 December 2016, an article titled: "Israel transformed a Christian religious site and its surrounding plots near Al-Walaja into a "national park"".

2) This news item was carried over from the Hebrew Yerushalaim newspaper.

3) In such a framework, I wish to clarify the following:

a) That the Israeli government resorted to various means to acquire the Armenian Patriarchate property in Al-Walaja - known as the St. Philip Monastery.

b) After a struggle for many years, the Patriarchate managed to recuperate a major chunk of the land through the Israeli Supreme Court, including the archeological site and the spring situated in it.

c) However, around 8 years ago, the Israeli authorities announced that the entire area (including the Armenian Patriarchate property) was designated to become a national park. Afterwards, the Patriarchate presented its objection to the relevant official bodies but the objection was rejected.

d) The Patriarchate dispatched several letters through its attorney, Mr. Mazen Copti, where it objected to the implementation of the building and leveling works on the land, and it merely allowed the Antiquities Authority to excavate in the land in search for antiquities, in compliance with the law. This does not diminish our property of the land and the right of the Armenian Apostolic Church and members of the community to visit and pray at this site.

4) Finally, I wish to assert that we persistently seek to resort to all available means, both legally and publicly, to stand up against any encroachments on Armenian Church lands from any party.

Respectfully,

Archbishop Nourhan Manougian  
Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem