

The original documents are located in Box 36, “7/14/76 - Filmed Message for the 31st Annual Archdiocese Convention of the Antiochian Orthodox Church” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN.....

31st ANNUAL ARCHDIOCESE CONVENTION

OF THE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

JULY 14, 1976

YOUR EMINENCE, METROPOLITAN PHILIP, MRS. FORD
AND I SALUTE YOU ON THE OCCASION OF YOUR 10th ANNIVERSARY
AS HEAD OF THE ANTIOCHIAN (ANT-TEE-OCK-IAN) ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN
ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA.

WE REMEMBER VERY WELL YOUR RECENT VISIT TO THE
WHITE HOUSE. THE PLEA THAT YOU MADE AS THE CHAIRMAN OF
THE STANDING CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN MIDDLE EASTERN CHRISTIAN
AND MOSLEM LEADERS, ON BEHALF OF THE SUFFERING PEOPLE OF
LEBANON, MADE A PROFOUND AND LASTING IMPRESSION ON ALL OF
US WHO ARE CONCERNED FOR A DURABLE AND JUST PEACE IN LEBANON
AND THE ENTIRE MIDDLE EAST.

AS YOU KNOW THROUGH OUR RECENT COMMUNICATIONS WITH YOU, I HAVE APPROVED THE TRANSMITTAL TO CONGRESS OF THE LEBANON RELIEF ACT WHICH AUTHORIZES 20 MILLION DOLLARS AND THE ISSUANCE OF HOUSING GUARANTEES TO PROVIDE RELIEF AND REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE TO THE LEBANESE PEOPLE.

THIS IS ONLY A SMALL MEASURE OF THE PROFOUND CONCERN AND SYMPATHY WHICH I HAVE FOR THE LEBANESE PEOPLE, WHOSE PAST HAS GIVEN US SUCH A FINE EXAMPLE OF RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND TOLERANCE WITHIN A SINGLE NATION. WE ARE KEENLY AWARE OF YOUR SPECIAL INTEREST AND ARE DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO BRING TOGETHER ALL THE PARTIES INVOLVED IN THIS RECENT TRAGIC CHAPTER IN LEBANON'S HISTORY.

WE SEEK A PERMANENT END TO THE FIGHTING AND A RETURN TO
POLITICAL PROCESSES WITHIN A UNIFIED LEBANON.

THE THEME OF YOUR NATIONAL CONVENTION, "FREEDOM
TO BELIEVE" IS MOST APPROPRIATE DURING AMERICA'S BICENTENNIAL
YEAR. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM HAS ALWAYS BEEN ONE OF THE
HALLMARKS OF THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE, A FACT WHICH HAS
CONTRIBUTED TO THE RICH DIVERSITY THAT IS THIS NATION'S GREATEST
STRENGTH. WE MUST CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE AND PROTECT
INDIVIDUALITY.

THE WEALTH WE HAVE OF CULTURAL, ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS
AND RACIAL TRADITIONS ARE VALUABLE COUNTERBALANCES TO THE
OVERPOWERING SAMENESS AND SUBORDINATION OF TOTALITARIAN
SOCIETIES.

IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT YOUR ETHNIC PRIDE AND
THE FINE FAMILY LIFE, WHICH IS THE HALLMARK OF THE ARABIC
SPEAKING PEOPLES EVERYWHERE, WILL BE A PART OF YOUR
CONTINUOUS DYNAMIC CONTRIBUTION TO THE FABRIC OF AMERICAN
LIFE.

I COMMEND YOUR DEDICATION TO CHURCH, NATION
AND FAMILY AND AS YOU BEGIN YOUR DELIBERATIONS, I WISH
YOU ALL A MEANINGFUL, PRODUCTIVE AND INSPIRING 31st ANNUAL
CONVENTION.

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