

Israel Approves 1st Arab Christian College

Mar Elias University to Be Established in Nazareth

HAIFA, Israel, APRIL 2, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- After gaining a long-sought approval from the Israeli government, the nation's first Arab Christian university is set to be established in Nazareth.

The Mar Elias College has been operating near Haifa as an offshoot of the University of Indianapolis. But after the March 29 approval from the government it is now the first Arab Israel private college and thus stands to serve the 120,000 Arab-speaking Christians in Israel (who are just 2% of the nation's 20% Arab-minority).

According to a press release from the Friends of Mar Elias group, students of every department will be required to take "peace studies" some hours a week, focusing on how "peaceful coexistence and cooperation in multiethnic regions, like in the Middle East, [can] be advanced and secured."

Seeking funds

The Friends of Mar Elias report that a challenge for the institution is financing, as tuition from students "mostly from families with modest income, [does] not cover the running costs," and the college will not receive state grants.

Nevertheless, the statement reported that the "project has been enjoying political support from different camps."

It noted: "The president of Israel [...] considers the realization of the Mar Elias College as an important contribution to the peaceful coexistence of Jews and Arabs in Israel; the European Union values the project, especially in view of the bilateral Action Plan E.U.-Israel, as important for three goals of bilateral cooperation: regional development, support of minorities and advancement of women; [and] the U.S. administration expressed its great interest in the recognition and support of the college."

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On the Net:

Mar Elias College: <http://www.mec.sahrat.net/>

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