



GRAND LODGE OF FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 6008 A.L.



**Akram R. Elias**  
*Grand Master*

November 10, 2008

Dear Most Worshipful, Right Worshipful, Worshipful Sirs and Brethren All:

The warm and cooperative fraternal relations we enjoy and maintain with all regular Grand Lodges remain among our highest priorities. For this reason, I am saddened that the Grand Master of Masons in the State of New York, Most Worshipful Brother Edward Gilbert, has issued a Resolution withdrawing the Grand Lodge of New York's recognition of our Grand Lodge, effective November 5, 2008.

**The decision by the Grand Master of Masons in New York will be recorded as a regretful moment in the history of Freemasonry. It is our view that the action by the Grand Lodge of New York to withdraw recognition and go immediately to all Grand Lodges rather than first making an earnest attempt to deal directly with us threatens amity and may lead to anarchy in the world of Freemasonry.**

Responding to our creation of Ahiram Lodge No. 1000 under our jurisdiction in the Republic of Lebanon, the Grand Lodge of New York has tried to claim for itself exclusive jurisdiction within the territory of Lebanon and has attempted to "suspend" the sitting Worshipful Master and Secretary of the lodge.

First, the Grand Lodge of New York's claim of exclusive jurisdiction in this free and sovereign nation outside of North America is invalid. There exists no Grand Lodge of Lebanon and the current operation there of regular lodges not beholden to the Grand Lodge of New York nullifies any claim of exclusive jurisdiction in that country.

Second, the Grand Lodge of New York, having seen the futility and of its assertions has attempted to undermine Ahiram Lodge by leveling meritless charges against a number of our D.C. brethren as a basis to "suspend" them after the fact. Worshipful Master and Secretary of Ahiram Lodge No. 1000, our Worshipful Brothers Maurice Feghali and Elias Feghali respectively, are under the sole jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of D.C. having legally demitted from the Grand Lodge of New York well before the dubious actions of the District Grand Lodge of Syria-Lebanon (Elias Feghali demitted on April 21 and Maurice Feghali demitted on June 23 of 2008), attesting to the fact that no charges were pending against them. Furthermore, Worshipful Brother Maurice Feghali's Mother

Lodge has always been Justice-Columbia Lodge No. 3 under our Grand Lodge and Worshipful Brother Elias Feghali, by placing his dimit from the Grand Lodge of New York with Justice-Columbia Lodge No. 3, of which he was already a member, made it his Mother Lodge.

**The Grand Lodge of New York, in its efforts to stop the establishment of Ahiram Lodge, has overreached when it attempted to suspend brothers solely beholden to the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia. They are our brothers. We can not stand by while another jurisdiction attempts to cast aspersions on them.**

**My Brethren, we have repeatedly requested clarification from the Grand Lodge of New York to back up its claims and assertions and even requested personal meetings. Regrettably, all of these earnest entreaties have gone unanswered. From the very start of this noble endeavor, while this Grand Lodge has consistently extended our fraternal hand, the Grand Lodge of New York has sought only to shut us out and threaten us.**

This is a serious matter. The very sovereignty of our Grand Jurisdiction is under assault. By attempting to create fear and exert psychological pressure, the Grand Lodge of New York is seeking to force us to surrender our sovereignty – something we will never abide.

On October 25, 2008, at its Annual Communication, our Grand Lodge overwhelmingly approved the chartering of Ahiram Lodge No. 1000 as a new constituent lodge of this jurisdiction with following understandings:

- our action is legal, legitimate, and well within our rights;
- we do not abandon our brothers or surrender our sovereignty in the face of scare tactics put forth by other jurisdictions;
- the mission of Ahiram Lodge is noble and fully compatible with the principles and vision of universal Freemasonry by bringing more Masonic Light to a region in desperate need of it.

Prior to the Grand Lodge's vote to charter, your Grand Master has fielded many questions about this matter and we have been open and transparent in our discussions with all concerned. I have addressed the Masters and Wardens Association on this topic; I have talked about it at each of our recent Grand Lodge Visitations and discussed it at a special session with our Past Grand Masters. Through it all, my motivation has always been to promote the Craft in general and Washington, DC Freemasonry in particular.

At the Annual Communication, I stated that the road ahead may be rough and rugged, but we are ready to meet the challenges before us. We will continue in the good faith fashion we have always maintained and will avail ourselves of every opportunity for dialogue through proper Masonic channels and protocol in order to foster understanding and harmony within our noble society without relinquishing the rights and privileges of our Most Worshipful Grand Lodge.

In the same vein, I recommend to all our brethren, in the strongest possible way, that notwithstanding the action taken by the Grand Lodge of New York, to welcome each and every brother from that jurisdiction, with open arms and extend to them every fraternal courtesy in accordance with our well established traditions.

Brethren, My loyalty and dedication to our beloved Grand Lodge are constant and unshakeable. At this seminal moment for our jurisdiction and its sovereignty, I call on your sense of loyalty and commitment. As Freemasons we have dedicated ourselves to building better communities and bridges of understanding. Our energies should be focused on these worthy goals and expanding the Light of Freemasonry to areas of the world that are in desperate need for it. With your steadfast support we can meet the challenges ahead.

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Akram R. Elias', written over a horizontal line.

Akram R. Elias  
Grand Master

PS. Attached to this letter is the full chronology of actions and correspondence relating to this matter.

## **Grand Lodge of New York (GLNY) Shuts Down Communication Channel Way Before the Chartering of Ahiram Lodge by the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia (GLDC)**

The following is the chronology of actions undertaken by GLNY that have contributed to effectively shutting down constructive communication between both of our Grand Lodges:

**July 20 – 22, 2007:** At the Northeast Conference of Grand Masters held in Williamsburg, Virginia, the Grand Master of New York makes verbal and unsubstantiated allegations to the Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia (GLDC) against unnamed members of the GLDC accusing them of interference in the upcoming elections of the Grand Lodge of New York. **The request by our Deputy Grand Master for clarification and substantiation of the allegations were met with no response.**

**November 21 - 30, 2007:** GLNY tries to impose on our Grand Lodge whom we should invite as our guest and at our own expense from the GLNY in violation of our Grand Lodge's very generous hospitality traditions.

**April 21, 2008:** GLNY sends a letter to GLDC making very serious and unsubstantiated accusations against GLDC alleging interference by members of GLDC in the "*internal matters of the District Grand Lodge of Syria-Lebanon*". Although GLNY does not provide any names nor refer to any specific incidents of interference in that letter, it does however **threaten our Grand Lodge of "serious consequences, perhaps, even withdrawal of recognition"**. GLNY goes further in that letter demanding to know within two weeks that "*stringent measures are being taken by GLDC and sanctions to be imposed...*"

**April 25, 2008:** GLDC promptly replies to the letter sent by GLNY expressing bewilderment and asking for clarification. How can our Grand Lodge take any measure and impose any sanctions on anything or anyone without knowing what the issue is in the first place? Furthermore, GLDC requests an urgent meeting with GLNY to discuss this very serious matter at a time and place of mutual convenience. **Our letter and request for information as well as a request for a meeting remain unanswered.**

In summary, the Grand Lodge of New York makes wild and unfounded allegations against our Grand Lodge, demands punitive measures, and threatens withdrawal of recognition without providing us with anything to work with and ignoring our pleas for clarification and information. It is this behavior on the part of the Grand Lodge of New York that has effectively shut down effective communication between our two Grand Lodges.

## **The Chartering of Ahiram Lodge by the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia**

**June 23, 2008:** At least seven members of our Grand Lodge submit a request to their Grand Master for a dispensation to open a Lodge in Lebanon for the purpose of working the DC ritual and receive applications for the degrees of Freemasonry from friends and associates.

**July 15, 2008:** GLDC sends a letter to GLNY informing the latter of the Grand Master of GLDC's decision to establish Ahiram Lodge, U.D. (Under Dispensation) in Beirut Lebanon. In that letter **GLDC states** “...*we look forward to the manifold opportunities for cooperation as we labor by your side ...*”

**July 16, 2008:** GLNY send a letter to GLDC stating that GLNY considers our action as an “*invasion of our Masonic Territory as printed by the Conference of Grand Masters of North America*” and threatens once again of withdrawing recognition of our Grand Lodge.

**July 21, 2008:** GLDC promptly responds to GLNY's letter of July 16. GLDC first states its position that the republic of Lebanon is a free and sovereign nation and an open territory due to the operation of Lodges within that country that are beholden to at least two sovereign Grand Lodges. Furthermore, GLDC requests information on any action by the Conference of Grand Masters of North America that GLNY referred to assert its claim of exclusive jurisdiction in Lebanon. **GLDC still awaits that information from GLNY.**

**July 22, 2008:** GLDC sends letter to GLNY informing the latter that the Grand Master of GLDC has postponed the consecration of Ahiram Lodge, U.D. for the time being and requests clarification of the legal basis for GLNY's concerns. **GLDC still awaits that information from GLNY.**

**July 22, 2008:** The Grand Master asked the Senior Grand Deacon of GLDC who is a dual member of GLNY to make contact with the Grand Secretary of New York and request a meeting between both of our Grand Lodges. **The request was conveyed but GLNY did not respond.**

**August 6, 2008:** GLNY sends letter to GLDC alleging “*serious breaches of time-tested and honored Masonic protocol...*” by stating the following:

- GLNY claims that a twinning that took place in 2003 between one of our Lodges and a Lodge under GLNY's District in Syria and Lebanon was done improperly and without permission.
- GLNY claims that the attendance and participation of the Deputy Grand Master of GLDC at a symposium where both clandestine and irregular Masons were in attendance and which was illegally sponsored by a Lodge under GLNY's District of Syria and Lebanon was done without consultation and/or permission of the Grand Lodge of New York.

- GLNY reminds GLDC of the letter dated April 21, 2008, and sent by GLNY expressing displeasure with the actions of the GLDC. (*this is the letter to which we responded on April 25, 2008, in which we asked for substantiation of the allegations and requested a meeting to discuss the serious of the accusations and for which we never got a response*)
- GLNY restates its objections to the establishment of Ahirom Lodge by GLDC based on the “North American Doctrine of Exclusive Jurisdiction”(GLNY reiterates its claim based on the doctrine of exclusive jurisdiction without providing the backing for that stand. GLDC requested that information in letters one dated July 21, 2008, and another dated July 22, 2008. **Both letters remain unanswered.**

**August 7, 2008:** GLDC responds promptly to the letter by GLNY dated August 6, 2008, and addresses the allegations and points made by GLNY as follows:

- The twinning done in 2003 was properly executed on our end. If GLNY’s District of Syria and Lebanon did not follow its own procedures, why would GLNY blame GLDC for failure within its own jurisdiction? Furthermore, why hasn’t GLNY raised this issue 5 years ago when it allegedly happened and could have been properly dealt with at the time? **GLDC has received no response on this point.**
- The Deputy Grand Master of GLDC participated in that symposium in 2007 at the invitation of the GLNY’s District of Syria and Lebanon. If GLNY’s District did not follow proper internal GLNY regulations as it is alleged, why then blame GLDC for improper action by GLNY’s District? Furthermore, the symposium in question was not tiled Masonic event but a public affair in the presence of women, children, and non-Masons! **No response from GLNY on this point either.**
- GLDC reiterates one more time its request for information backing GLNY’s claim of exclusive jurisdiction. **GLDC is still awaiting GLNY’s response.**

**August 14, 2008:** temple room where Ahirom Lodge will meet is consecrated and officers of Ahirom Lodge, U.D. are installed.

**August 16, 2008:** GLDC informs GLNY that Ahirom Lodge, U.D. voted unanimously to not accept applications for affiliation from Brethren who demit from Lodges under GLNY’s District of Syria and Lebanon. Ahirom Lodge, U.D. did this as a goodwill gesture toward GLNY’s District given that so many Masons have been demitting from that District’s Lodges expressing dissatisfaction and displeasure with that District’s leadership. **GLNY’s response was to issue on August 18, 2008, an Edit forbidding any New York Masons from visiting and/or conducting Masonic intercourse with Ahirom Lodge!**

**September 16, 2008:** GLNY informs GLDC that the former's District of Syria and Lebanon has suspended among others the Master and Secretary of Ahiaram Lodge, U.D. A list of allegations is included in that letter.

**September 30, 2008:** GLDC responds to GLNY stating that both Brothers in question had legally demitted from GLNY well before the order of suspension was issued by GLNY's District and that both were solely beholden to GLDC by virtue of their membership in our Grand Lodge. In fact, the Mother Lodge of the Master of Ahiaram Lodge, U.D. is under our Grand Lodge.

**October 1, 2008:** The Grand Master of GLDC receives an email in which a Past Grand Officer of GLNY's District is conversing with the District's Grand Master and Grand Secretary in a tone and temperament that are not respectful of the tenets and obligations of our Order. The Grand Master of GLDC responds to email "**...no matter how offensive and saddening its content may be, it is imperative that we rise above pettiness and be guided by our obligations as Freemasons towards a Brother Mason who has obviously erred in judgment and conduct.**"

**October 2, 2008:** Grand Master of GLDC sends a personal letter Grand Master of GLNY stressing (as was the case in every correspondence sent to GLNY) the need to preserve fraternal relations between our two Grand Lodges and requesting that a face-to-face meeting take place at time and place of mutual convenience. The Grand Master of GLDC also included in that letter the email referred to earlier. **GLDC receives no response from GLNY.**

**October 5 – 6, 2008:** On the occasion of the Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Delaware, the Grand Secretary of GLDC expresses the desire of the Grand Master of GLDC to meet with the Grand Master and Grand Secretary of GLNY the following week in Columbus, Ohio on the occasion of the Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Ohio. **The Grand Master of New York stated that he would not agree to hold a meeting with the Grand master of GLDC on that occasion.**

**October 6, 2008:** GLNY sends letter to GLDC questioning our claim that Brothers "suspended" by GLNY's District are solely beholden to GLDC and bases its claim on the concept of exclusive jurisdiction without stating it as such!

**October 15, 2008:** GLDC responds promptly to GLNY reiterating the position that both Brethren were beholden solely to GLDC and that GLNY's District was overreaching with its order of suspension. GLDC also states that in a letter dated October 2, 2008, GLDC reiterated its position that "...we should never let a difference of opinion affect the harmony that exists between our two Grand Lodges and appealed to you that the time had come for a face to face discussion of the matter." **GLDC still awaits a response to the request for a meeting.**

**November 5, 2008:** GLNY adopts a resolution withdrawing recognition of GLDC and informs all Grand Lodges with which it is in amity.

***November 6, 2008:*** GLDC sends letter to all Grand Lodges with which it is in amity rejecting the claims upon which GLNY's action was based and reiterates its readiness and desire to safeguard fraternal relations.

***November 7, 2008:*** On the occasion of the Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Virginia in Richmond, the Grand Master of GLDC requested a meeting right there and then with the Grand Master and Grand Secretary of GLNY who were also in attendance. A good discussion took place that evening that opened the door for more discussions.