

**The Law of the Republic of Armenia Regarding the Relationship Between The Republic of Armenia and the Holy Apostolic Armenian Church (retrieved from**

<http://www.armenianchurch.org/index.jsp?sid=3&nid=724&y=2007&m=4&d=5&lng=en>)

Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, Information Services, 05 May, 2007

*Unofficial English translation*

**Article I – Object of the Regulation of the Law**

This law regulates the special relationship between the Republic of Armenia and the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church.

**Article II – Holy Armenian Apostolic Church**

1. The Republic of Armenia recognizes the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church as the national church, with the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin as its headquarters and its hierarchal sees of the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia and the Armenian Patriarchates of Holy Jerusalem and Constantinople; and the exceptional mission of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church in the spiritual life of the Armenian people, their national cultural development and preservation of their national identity.

2. The Republic of Armenia recognizes the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church as autocephalous (self-governing) within its hierarchal scope.

**Article III – Catholicos of All Armenians**

The President of the Republic of Armenia shall grant citizenship of the Republic of Armenia to the elected head of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church – the Catholicos of All Armenians – if he is not a citizen of the Republic of Armenia.

**Article IV – Legislation Regulating the Relationship between the Republic of Armenia and the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church**

The regulating principles of the relationship between the Republic of Armenia and the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church are delineated by the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia; its general relationship as delineated by the RA law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" and other laws and international agreements; and its special relationship – as a relationship between the state and national church recognized by the state – as delineated by this law.

**Article V – Inheritance of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church**

1. The Holy Armenian Apostolic Church's historical, spiritual, cultural and documental inheritance is an important and indivisible part of the foundation of the national identity.

2. That portion of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church's historical, spiritual, cultural and documental treasures which are the property of the state may be sold, disposed of or transported from its location of safekeeping only by previously informing the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church. The list of these treasures is delineated by the government of the Republic of Armenia, in consultation with the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church.

**Article VI – Structures of Worship of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church**

The Holy Armenian Apostolic Church has the right to construct monasteries, churches and other buildings of worship; and to rehabilitate monasteries and churches that have the status of historical monuments. The preservation of the churches and other buildings of worship that have the status of historical monuments is the joint responsibility of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church and the Republic of Armenia.

**Article VII – Cultural Institutions belonging to the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church**

The government of the Republic of Armenia shall delineate the amount and purpose of state assistance for the protection and enrichment of cultural institutions, collections, museums, libraries and archives which are the property of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church and constitute a part of the national cultural inheritance, in the proposed annual state budget, having previously discussed it with the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church.

**Article VIII – Role of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church in the Educational Sphere**

1. The Holy Armenian Apostolic Church has the right to:

- a) Establish or sponsor kindergarten (pre-school) institutions, elementary, secondary and high schools, specialty colleges and institutions of higher learning, within the framework of the legislation of the Republic of Armenia.
  - b) Participate in the preparation of the scholastic curriculum and textbooks for "Armenian Church History" courses within state educational institutions, the defining of minimum requirements of instructors of said subject, and to present prospective instructors to the schools.
  - c) To organize voluntary scholastic courses within state educational institutions, utilizing their buildings and resources, coordinating the issues regarding the realization of courses with said institutions.
  - d) Contribute to the spiritual education of society within educational institutions according to the scope of the law.
2. Scholastic institutions established by the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church shall receive the same assistance that the state provides to other private institutions.
  3. The state guarantees the implementation of the right to a religious education on a voluntary basis.
  4. The official communications of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church shall be reported by mass media outlets without alteration.

#### **Article IX – Registration of Marriages by the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church**

The Republic of Armenia recognizes marriages performed according to the canonical rites of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church and dissolutions of marriage by the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church in accordance with the stipulations of an agreement signed by the Republic of Armenia and the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church.

#### **Article X – Benevolent Pastoral Activity of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church**

The Holy Armenian Apostolic Church has the right to have its permanent spiritual representative in hospitals, orphanages, boarding schools, military bases and penal institutions, including investigative isolation cells.

#### **Article XI – Income of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church Exempt from Taxation**

1. The Holy Armenian Apostolic Church has the right to organize public fundraising efforts and to receive donations and gifts, which are exempt from taxation.
2. Also exempt from taxation are the production and sale of objects and accessories of a liturgical nature.

#### **Article XII – Relationship between the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church and Law Enforcement Agencies**

The Republic of Armenia recognizes the secrecy of ecclesiastical confession. A priest of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church shall not be called as a witness to be questioned regarding those circumstances of a case which have been made known to him during confession.

#### **Article XIII – Activities of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church in Other Countries**

The Holy Armenian Apostolic Church, as a national church which operates in other countries as well, is under the protection of the Republic of Armenia in accordance with international legal standards.

#### **Article XIV – Effective Date of the Law**

The law shall take effect on the tenth day following its proclamation.