

## Elias Zahlawi: Not an average priest



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See more about Father Elias Zahlawi

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### Early life

After completing his studies, including six years of Theology in Jerusalem, and after several missions abroad, Elias Zahlawi started his service in The Lady of Damascus church. In the picture Father Zahlawi (first sitting on the right) is surrounded by friends in the church courtyard.



## Building for the people

In The Lady of Damascus. Father Zahlawi soon engaged in renewal works to build a large multi-purpose room in the basement of the church for the community to use.



## A growing project

Lawket al Farah choir was founded by Father Zahlawi back in 1977 with just 55 youths from different Christian denominations. Today, the choir holds shows in Syria and abroad as a means to communicate coexistence and peace. The photo depicts the 2010 Christmas show at the National Opera House.



## Backstage

For over 3 decades Father Zahlawi sustained with pride the activities of the choir. In the photos he is watching a scene of a performance from the backstage.





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## Speaking abroad

Through the choir, Father Zahlawi speaks to communities in Europe and America about coexistence. In the photo, Zahlawi speaks to an audience in one of the shows held in Detroit, Michigan in 2009.



## Pure friendship

The passion for music is a common trait Father Elias shares with the famous Lebanese musical icon Wadih Al Safi. In October 2010, the singer was invited by Father Zahlawi to join the choir in a concert titled "Al Farah Al Safi" which means "Pure Joy" in Arabic. In the photo, Zahlawi pays a visit to the home of Al-Safi in Beirut.



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## Work space

The austere office of Father Zahlawi's reflects his dedication to the community. Decorating his walls are old and new icons along with photos of the choir that started over 30 years ago.



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### Messages

Father Elias Zahlawi often speaks to audiences in the U.S. and Europe as an Arab Christian priest who usually refrains from topics relating to politics. However, in 2007 the Greek-Catholic priest "spiritually supported" the cause of Lebanese Hezbollah through an [interview](#) given to the French Le Figaro.



## For the Holy Qouran

In 2010, Zahlawi sent a letter to American minister Terry Jones to convince him to stop his burning campaign against the Holy Quoran – as a means that Father Zahlawi saw will ignite “disdain and hatred among people”.



## Publications

Along the years Father Zahlawi published his thoughts in a few books, the latest is pictured in the photo.



## Purpose

"Imagine there is a bird who lives in a beautiful forest and the bird loves that forest more than anything. It's his home. One day, the forest catches on fire. All the bird can do is fly down to the river, collect some water in his beak, and throw it on the fire. I am like that bird. Maybe it won't do much, but I won't just sit by and do nothing."



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