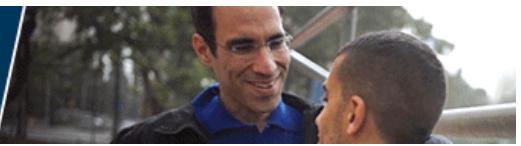


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Palestinian Authority arrests prominent Christian clergyman

By [Khaled Abu Toameh](#)

April 3, 2016 18:33

Syriac Orthodox Church Archbishop Swerios Malki Murad is the most senior Christian clergyman to be arrested by the PA since its inception in 1994.



Palestinian policemen clash with stone throwers in Gaza. (photo credit:REUTERS)

Palestinian Authority police have released from prison the archbishop of the Syriac Orthodox Church, Swerios Malki Murad. The release came on

Sunday night, the day after his arrest in Bethlehem.

Palestinian prosecutors said the archbishop had been interrogated following a complaint lodged by a woman belonging to his Syriac community.

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Although they refused to discuss details about the complaint, the prosecutors said the woman had accused the head of the church of "sexual assault."

Murad was released on bail following protests by members of his community and by prominent Christian figures in Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

However, he was summoned for further interrogation on Monday.

PA policemen arrested him on Saturday night as he was on his way back from a celebration in the nearby Al-Khader village.

Archbishop Theodosius (Hanna) of Sebastia, of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, denounced the PA police for the way they handled the case. He said it was "inconceivable" that an archbishop and church leader should be arrested in a humiliating way.

"This is completely unjustified and unacceptable," he added. "They should respect his religious and spiritual status."

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