

# Cleric Cites Arab-Israeli Hate as Factor in Shooting

By JOSEPH NOVITSKI

"If one is looking for the psychological background of this assassination, it must be found in the years and years of Arab-Israeli hate," Bishop Shahe Ajamian of the Armenian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem said here yesterday.

Although they were not members of his church, Bishop Ajamian, Chancellor of Jerusalem's Armenian Patriarchate, knew the family of Sirhan Bishara Sirhan, the young Arab Christian being held in the killing of Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

The Armenian prelate is in the United States to help in a Christian-Jewish-Moslem effort to raise \$2-million to rebuild Christian shrines on Mount Zion that were damaged in Arab-Israeli conflict over the years.

Recalling young Sirhan's educational background and the shifting temper of Palestinian Arab feelings toward Israel, the Bishop suggested that Sirhan had left Jerusalem when Arab hate for Israel was at its peak.

## Recalls Passionate Speeches

He said in an interview that he thought Sirhan might not have sensed a moderation of Arab attitudes in Jerusalem after the Arab-Israeli war in June, 1967.

Bishop Ajamian spoke of "passionate speeches on all the Arab radios spreading hate" in the period immediately following the Suez war in 1956. The Sirhan family, which had lived in the Armenian quarter of Jerusalem near the Patriarchate,



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Bishop Shahe Ajamian of the Armenian Orthodox Church

arrived in New York in January, 1967.

Asked whether he thought organizations in this country

that dealt in anti-Israel propaganda, the precise, soft-spoken priest said, "I suppose that there must be."

The Armenian Orthodox Church, Bishop Ajamian said, is one of the Eastern Christian faiths, like the Coptic and Ethiopian Churches, and operates all the primary schools in the Armenian sector of Jerusalem's Old City.

He said he believed that Sirhan had attended one of the church's schools, although he did not remember the boy.

Sirhan's father, Bishara Sirhan, "was known to quite everybody because he used to work in the municipal water department," Bishop Ajamian said. He recalled that the father was a very quiet man and that the family had a reputation of piety and devotion.

## Known as Arab Christians

"They are what we call Arab Christians," the Bishop said. "They are known as an honorable and conservative family."

Bishop Ajamian met Senator Kennedy last February when he accompanied the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, Elisha II, on a visit to the Senate. He was impressed with Senator Kennedy's knowledge of the Arab-Israeli problem during a 15-minute conversation.

"His approach was very — I want to use the term Christian, that of a person who loves human beings as such," the prelate said.

Bishop Ajamian spoke to his Patriarch Wednesday night in Jerusalem and afterward, in a telegram to Mrs. Kennedy, expressed the Patriarch's sorrow. The Bishop said he planned to attend Senator Kennedy's funeral here.