



Note: This letter is addressed to the religious leaders of the Massachusetts Albanian Community listed below as an open public letter to all of the Massachusetts Albanian Community. People should feel free to share it with others.

The Most Reverend Nikon, Archbishop of Boston, New England, and the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America
The Most Reverend Ilia, Archbishop of the Albanian Orthodox Diocese of America
The Very Reverend Father Arthur Liolin, St. George Cathedral, Albanian Orthodox Church in America (Boston)
The Reverend Father Kostandin Tuda, Holy Trinity Albanian Orthodox Church of America (Boston)
The Very Reverend Father John Scollard, St. John the Baptist Church, Albanian Orthodox Church in America (Boston)
The Reverend Mark Doku, St. George Cathedral, Albanian Orthodox Church in America (Boston)
The Very Reverend Father John Daly Jr, St. Nicholas Church, Albanian Orthodox Church in America (Southbridge)
The Very Reverend Father Joseph Gallick, Church of the Annunciation, Albanian Orthodox Church in America (Natick)
The Very Reverend Father Timothy Lowe, Assumption of the Virgin Mary Church, Albanian Orthodox Church in America (Worcester)

December 9, 2014

Re: Proposal for the Religious and Secular Organizations and the Massachusetts Albanian Community to Work Together To Establish an Albanian Community Center (s) in Massachusetts

Dear Leaders of the Albanian Orthodox Community in Massachusetts,

We hope that this letter finds you well, and that you had an enjoyable Thanksgiving and celebration of Albanian Independence.

As you know, for many years, people have talked about establishing an Albanian Community Center (or centers) in Massachusetts. The Board of Directors and Advisory Board of the Massachusetts Albanian American Society ([MAASBESA](http://www.maasbesa.org)) believe that the time is ripe to establish the first Albanian Community Center in Massachusetts in 2015.

We are planning to open an Albanian Community Center in early 2015 somewhere in the Boston area -- it could be South Boston, North Shore, or South Shore. First, we have to evaluate the various options. Albanian Language School classes and other activities would be held there, and we are hoping that the Albanian religious community in Massachusetts will work together with us towards this goal.

We would like to work together with you for several reasons including:

1. We will be able to reach and help serve more members of our community -- the raison d'etre for all of us;
2. We will strengthen our organizations by reaching new people to increase membership and participation; and
3. Working together we can better mobilize financial support to reach our individual and collective objectives.

You may be asking yourself -- is this letter about money?? Well, it is, but not just that. Money is a means to the end of working together to better serve the Albanian Community of Massachusetts. This letter is really more about initiating a dialogue and to maybe have a brainstorming session in early 2015 with key leaders and members of the Massachusetts Albanian Community. Money will take care of itself later on. It is no secret, of course, that the Albanian churches in Massachusetts have more financial resources than the other organizations.

So far, MAASBESA has raised about \$5,000 toward establishing an Albanian Community Center in Massachusetts. More importantly, a Network of Albanian Real Estate Professionals lead by the [Law Offices of Sonja B. Selami](#) is expected to raise over \$1,000 per month for the Community Center. [This network currently has 14 members](#) including real estate agents, real estate financiers, insurance agents, and lawyers.

For now, we are only asking you to think about how we might be able to work together, and to share this letter with your church board and parishioners as you see fit. There are no expectations or commitments, of course, just the hope that we can find ways to work together in a more formal and institutionalized way in the future. We realize, of course, that there is 100 years of history of the churches working to help Massachusetts Albanians along with secular organizations here -- we are not proposing to "start" it now or implying that cooperation has not been very good in the past. In fact, we think cooperation has been very good -- we would just like to take it up a notch now -- that's all.

Perhaps you are wondering what sorts of cooperation we could have in the future -- they are really only limited by our imaginations and, of course, resources. In the short run, it could be quite simple where MAASBESA and the churches would co-finance operation of a Community Center (s) costing a small amount of money like \$2,000-\$4,000 per month and together we would provide community services. In the long run, it could be as ambitious as buying property and building a community center and church in the same location.

The longer run vision could include senior housing (as is currently done by the church in Worcester), a place for Albanians with medical problems to come and stay (as is done by the Greek Orthodox Church with [Philoxenia House](#)), and/or facilities that would not only include space for classes and cultural activities, but also space for functions like baptism, birthday, and engagement parties (much like the Sons of Italy, Knights of Columbus, or Elks Lodge models). Any of these could serve as a model of religious and secular institutions working together for a greater good.

It is also important to point out that our Community continues to evolve and change. The Community has an increasing number of young and older professionals who are quite well established and would support a Community Center and related activities carried out by the churches, MAASBESA, and other local Albanian organizations (see list at the end of this letter). We are also, of course, much more diverse now with a much larger number of Albanians who are not religious and/or Orthodox by origin than was the case 20 years ago, and who hail from all parts of Albania, Kosova, Macedonia, and Montenegro. In over 100 years, our Community has never been larger or more successful.

Reaching these people in the future requires going beyond the conventional activities that our churches have undertaken in the past, and we would like to work together with you to find ways for all of us to reach more people and help more people. Our estimate is that there are 50,000 Albanians in Massachusetts based on data at the end of 2012. Clearly this is a much larger number than the people involved in organizations like MAASBESA and the churches. It is also important to point out that, as with all immigrant populations over time, it is likely the concentration of people will be increasingly in the suburbs in the future.

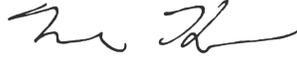
According to our MAASBESA database the percentage distribution of Albanians in Massachusetts is as follows:

WORCESTER	21.2%
BOSTON	17.3%
QUINCY	7.6%
PEABODY	3.3%
REVERE	2.5%
SALEM	2.4%
BEVERLY	2.1%
WINTHROP	2.1%
MALDEN	2.0%
LYNN	1.9%
SOMERVILLE	1.7%
CAMBRIDGE	1.4%
BRAINTREE	1.2%
EVERETT	1.2%
NORWOOD	1.1%
OTHER	31.0% (includes all towns with less than 1%)
TOTAL	100.0%

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter, all the best for the Holidays, and we hope to have a meeting with several of you after the New Year to discuss how we might be able to better work together in the future, and better serve the Albanian Community of Massachusetts. We hope this letter has shed some light on the possibilities ahead for all of us.

In closing, as a sign of support and our thanks for the support of the religious community for the activities of MAASBESA over the past 8 years, we will make a Christmas donation of \$500 each to St. George Cathedral and Holy Trinity Church.

Sincerely Yours,



Mark Kosmo, Chair

**Members of the Board of Directors of
MAASBESA and the Advisory Board:**

Mark Kosmo, Chair
Sonila Gjata, Vice Chair
Anila Piqani, Treasurer
Iris Hoxha, Secretary
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Migen Hasanaj
Redis Kelmendi
Stefan Kochi
Beralda Kokoshi
Arber Muhameti
Katherine Prifti

**List of Albanian Organizations in Massachusetts
That will Receive a Copy of this Letter**

Albanian American Law Society
Albanian American Medical Society
Albanian American National Organization
Albanian American Veterans Organization
Albanian Orthodox Church of the Annunciation, Natick
Albanian Student Organizations BU, UMass, Harvard+
Albanian United Soccer Club, Boston
Arberia TV, Worcester
Bota Shqiptare TV, Worcester
Chameria Human Rights Association, Boston
Frosina Information Network, Boston
Holy Trinity Albanian Orthodox Church, South Boston
Kombi Shoqata, Worcester
Kosovar Society of Boston
MAASBESA, Boston
Network of Albanian Professionals in Boston
Shkolla Shqipe, Worcester
St. George Cathedral, South Boston
St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church, South Boston
St. Mary's Assumption Albanian Orthodox Church, Worcester
St. Nicholas Albanian Church Southbridge