

Istanbul Statement on the Church in Syria

Issued by the Religious Liberty Partnership

April 2013

As members of the Religious Liberty Partnership meeting in Istanbul, Turkey, we support the appeal of our brothers and sisters in Syria for the worldwide church to pray for the nation of Syria and the Syrian church at large amidst the current crisis. We specifically call on Christian denominations and organizations worldwide to take this appeal to their members in recognition that we are one body united in Christ.

The RLP acknowledges:

- The call of Syrian Christian leaders for prayer as they struggle to survive amidst this crisis;
- The frustration and fears of the Syrian people following decades of political repression;
- The Syrian refugees and displaced finding protection and critical assistance in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and other countries;
- The important international efforts to broker a solution to the ongoing conflict in Syria; and
- The nation's historic ethnic and religious diversity and peaceful coexistence which is now placed at risk.

The RLP is concerned about:

- The exodus of Christians and other ethnic and religious minorities from Syria as well as the attacks on and destruction of religious sites of all faiths;
- The lack of respect for humanitarian law, including kidnappings, and ongoing violence;
- The security and well-being of Syrian refugees and those internally displaced; and
- The inadequate input from and representation of ethnic and religious minorities in the political dialogue regarding the ongoing crisis in Syria.

We call on the international community:

- To provide sufficient protection for all ethnic and religious communities as well as their historical, religious, and cultural sites;
- To encourage all relevant parties to uphold international humanitarian standards, including appropriate and principled communication, fundraising, and program administration;

- To collaborate with organizations assisting the church in Syria and to promote peaceful coexistence between all ethnic and religious communities;
- To support organizations and agencies working to improve the security and provide for the well-being of those displaced;
- To work toward a peaceful political and diplomatic solution to the conflict that ensures the participation of all Syrians including all ethnic and religious communities.

We call on the worldwide church:

- To participate with the Refugee Highway Partnership (www.refugeehighway.net) in World Refugee Sunday, June 23, 2013 and designate it as a special day of prayer for Christians in Syria and all those affected by the current crisis; and
- To write to the UN Special Envoy for Syria and ask him to pay particular attention to vulnerable ethnic and religious minorities, ensuring their equal participation in his mandate.

The RLP commits:

- To pray for the church and its leaders as they stand amidst the ongoing attacks on their communities throughout the crisis;
- To raise awareness and work toward a peaceful solution of the current crisis, including reconciliation among the various ethnic and religious communities; and
- To utilize practices that prioritize the well-being of all Syrians when providing assistance and advocating on behalf of the vulnerable.

Members of the Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP):

(Note: web sites are listed for prayer resources and additional information. Though this statement is released with complete unanimity, some members of the RLP have chosen not to be listed for security reasons.)

- Advocates International, USA: www.AdvocatesInternational.org
- Alliance Defending Freedom, USA: www.alliancedefendingfreedom.org
- All India Christian Council, INDIA: www.ChristianCouncil.in
- American Center for Law and Justice, USA: www.aclj.org
- Associação Nacional de Juristas Evangélicos, BRASIL: www.anajure.org.br
- Asia Evangelical Alliance, ASIA: www.asiaevangelicals.org
- China Aid, USA: www.ChinaAid.org
- Christian Solidarity Worldwide, HONG KONG: www.csw.org.hk
- Christian Solidarity Worldwide, NIGERIA: www.cswng.org

- Christian Solidarity Worldwide, UNITED KINGDOM: www.csw.org.uk
- Christian Solidarity Worldwide, USA: www.cswusa.org
- Danish European Mission, DENMARK: www.daneu.dk
- Friends of the Martyred Church, FINLAND: www.martyredchurch.net
- Hilfe für Mensch und Kirche (HMK), SWITZERLAND: www.hmk-aem.ch
- Hilfsaktion Maertyrerkerche (HMK), GERMANY: www.verfolgte-christen.org
- International Christian Concern, USA: www.persecution.org
- International Institute for Religious Freedom, GERMANY, SOUTH AFRICA, SRI LANKA: www.iirf.eu
- Jubilee Campaign, USA: www.JubileeCampaign.org
- Law and Liberty Trust, USA: www.lawandlibertytrust.org
- Light for the Peoples, SWEDEN: www.ljusioster.org
- Middle East Concern, MIDDLE EAST: www.meconcern.org
- Open Doors International, THE NETHERLANDS: www.opendoors.org
- Open Doors, UK & IRELAND: www.opendoorsuk.org
- Open Doors, USA: www.opendoorsusa.org
- Release International, UNITED KINGDOM: www.releaseinternational.org
- Rule of Law Institute, BULGARIA: www.ruleoflawinstitute.bg
- Russian Ministries, USA: www.russian-ministries.org
- Seoul USA: www.seoulusa.org
- Set My People Free, EGYPT: www.freedom2worship.org
- Stefanus Alliance International, NORWAY: www.stefanus.no
- The Voice of the Martyrs, CANADA: www.persecution.net
- World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission, GLOBAL: www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc

The Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP) is a collaborative effort of Christian organizations from over 20 countries focused on religious liberty. The RLP seeks to more intentionally work together in addressing advocacy, assistance, and in raising the awareness of religious persecution globally. Members of the RLP are substantially involved (time, personnel, and resources) with ministry to persecuted Christians and/or on religious liberty issues in various contexts and strategy. For more information on the Istanbul Statement or on the Religious Liberty Partnership (www.RLPPartnership.org), contact Brian O’Connell, RLP Facilitator at: Brian@RLPartnership.org; +1 425.218.4718.