

Statement on the Church in Syria

Issued by the Religious Liberty Partnership

March 2016

As the Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP), meeting in Oxford, UK, we commemorate the fifth anniversary of the violent conflict in Syria by joining with Syrian church leaders' calls for renewed prayers for peace in Syria and for all affected by the ongoing and brutal conflict.

The scale of human suffering endured by the Syrian people is beyond comprehension. We acknowledge the nation's long history of ethnic and religious diversity and coexistence, which is now so severely challenged. We celebrate the substantial social, economic, cultural, political and spiritual influence of indigenous Christian communities in Syria since the earliest days of the Christian church. We recognise the vital contribution of Christians, alongside their compatriots, in supporting those who suffer through the ongoing conflict. They play an integral role in the rebuilding of their country.

We appreciate the ongoing commitment of the Christian communities to Syrian society as a whole. We note that Christians consider themselves part of the Syrian majority that longs for peace, stability and the establishment of the rule of law and equality for all. The RLP remains committed to supporting Syria's Christian communities, together with all people of good will, both in Syria and in the international community, as they build the necessary capacity to facilitate peace-making and reconciliation.

We acknowledge the vital contribution of all who are supporting the millions displaced (IDPs) within Syria and those who are refugees, including through programmes to restore dignity, create jobs, provide education and deliver trauma care. The RLP notes with gratitude the enormous contribution and generosity of neighbouring countries that have received overwhelming numbers of often desperate and traumatised Syrians. Continued provision of holistic support for IDPs and refugees is critical to enable all peoples of Syria to have confidence in, and hope for, the future.

Recommendations:

1. We call upon the worldwide church to join in renewed prayer for peace in Syria and for all affected by the ongoing and brutal conflict.
2. We call upon all involved or with influence in the crisis, including the UN Special Envoy, the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), and all parties to the conflict in Syria, to redouble efforts towards achieving lasting peace, including through:

- a. Supporting the consolidation of the current cessation of hostilities by ensuring that funding and provision of arms to all parties to the conflict in Syria is halted, and the influx of foreign fighters stemmed – measures vital as first steps to enhancing confidence that a peaceful solution will be sustained;
- b. Encouraging and incentivising all relevant parties to the conflict to maintain diversity of ethnicity and religion within Syria based on the principles of equal citizenship and social justice, as central components of any settlement to bring long-term stability and prosperity to the country;
- c. Instigating flexible funding opportunities, including for faith-based and community-based organisations - within Syria and in neighbouring countries - to promote sustainable approaches of non-partisan and inclusive support and to enhance the vital engagement of such groups in relief work, rebuilding projects, reconciliation initiatives and psycho-social care.

Members of the Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP):

Please note that though this statement is released with complete unanimity, several members of the RLP have chosen not to be listed for security or other reasons. Web sites are listed for prayer resources and additional information.

- Advocates International, USA: www.advocatesinternational.org
- Alliance Defending Freedom, USA: www.alliancedefendingfreedom.org
- All India Christian Council, INDIA: www.ChristianCouncil.in
- Associação Nacional de Juristas Evangélicos (ANAJURE), BRAZIL: www.anajure.org.br
- 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
- Hilfe für Mensch und Kirche (HMK), SWITZERLAND: www.hmk-aem.ch
- Hilfsaktion Maertyrerkerche (HMK), GERMANY: www.verfolgte-christen.org
- International Institute for Religious Freedom, GERMANY, SOUTH AFRICA, SRI LANKA: www.iirf.eu

- Jubilee Campaign, USA: www.JubileeCampaign.org
- Light for the Peoples, SWEDEN: www.ljusioster.org
- Middle East Concern, MIDDLE EAST: www.meconcern.org
- Mission Eurasia, USA: <https://missioneurasia.org>
- Open Doors International, THE NETHERLANDS: <https://www.opendoors.org>
- Open Doors, USA: www.opendoorsusa.org
- Release International, UNITED KINGDOM: www.releaseinternational.org
- Stefanus Alliance International, NORWAY: www.stefanus.no
- The Voice of the Martyrs, CANADA: <https://www.vomcanada.com>
- The Voice of the Martyrs, KOREA: <http://vomkorea.kr>
- World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission, GLOBAL: www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc