



ԱՌԱՋՆՈՐԳՈՒԹԻՒՆ ՀԱՅՈՑ ՄԵՐԻ ՊՐԻԳԱՆԻՈՅ ԵՒ ԻՌԼԱՆՏԵԱՅԻ
DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF THE UNITED KINGDOM AND
THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

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Գերազնորհ Տ. Վահան Եպս. Յովհաննէսեան, Առաջնորդ եւ Հայրապետական Պատուիրակ
His Grace Bishop Vahan Hovhanessian, Ph.D., Primate and Pontifical Legate

A Statement by Bishop Vahan Hovhanessian, President of the “Council of Oriental Orthodox Churches in the United Kingdom and Ireland” and Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland on the Situation in Syria

It is with a deep sense of responsibility let alone mounting concern that the *Council of Oriental Orthodox Churches in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland* (COOC) feels compelled to speak out once more about the atrocities being committed against innocent men, women and children in Syria.

Over the past few months, the attacks against indigenous Christian communities in different parts of Syria have been increasing and there have been numerous reported incidents both against persons or churches. Whilst the attacks against the residents of Maaloula - described as the Lourdes of the Middle East - were viewed by many on their television screens, it is regrettable that the world community has largely remained mute to similar physical attacks as well as hostage-taking and the vandalism of churches elsewhere across the country such as in Sadad recently.

We at COOC remain convinced that a majority of Muslims and Christians condemn such violence. Like us, they too believe that such acts are contrary to the genuine values, teachings and traditions of the followers of all three Abrahamic traditions in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region. Like us too, a majority of Syrians remain eager for the safe and quick release of Metropolitans Mor Yohanna Ibrahim and Boulos Yazigi of the Syrian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox Archdioceses who were abducted on near Aleppo on 22 April 2013.

We take the convening this week of the World Council of Churches 10th General Assembly in Busan, South Korea, as well as the forthcoming summit meeting with Pope Francis at the Vatican on 21st November of the patriarchs and major archbishops of the Oriental Churches of Syria, Iraq and the Middle East, as two ecumenical occasions to urge all men and women of good will to raise their voices and redouble their efforts against such unacceptable practices that are fast becoming the norm rather than the exception in Syria, in Egypt and elsewhere.

We appeal to all parties in Syria, the government as much as the opposition factions, to ensure that the longstanding conviviality between all believers and communities is not broken by actions that use Islam for un-Islamic ends.

We also pray with the ancient prophets for peace to reign in the whole of Syria as we recall that “They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks” (Mic 4:3 & Isa 2:4).

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