

Urgent Appeal
From the Supreme Council
of the Evangelical Community in Syria and Lebanon¹
To all the Evangelical and Protestant Churches and Organizations
Across the World

1. We, the leaders of Evangelical and Protestant churches and organizations affiliated to the Supreme Council of the Evangelical Community in Syria and Lebanon, have met together at this critical juncture of our history in order to reflect on the current situation, and on the tragic events that our people in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon are passing through. We are most concerned over the great human suffering and political difficulties that our people in these countries are facing. We have deeply reflected upon this deteriorating state of affairs, and have been greatly disturbed and shocked by the ugly incidents of violence that innocent civilians and entire communities, especially Christian, have been subjected to.
2. We also write to you in solidarity with the various appeals and statements that have been issued by the leaders of our sister Eastern Churches, as well as by some Islamic groups, concerning the recent development of events in Iraq; and especially the forced displacement and murderous killings of individuals and groups by the so-called *Islamic State in Iraq and Syria* (ISIS), killings that verge on being a bona fide genocide.²
3. We are also mindful of the catastrophic consequences of the bloody conflict that has plagued Syria for three years now. We are horrified by the amount of death, destruction and ongoing displacement that has ravaged vast sectors of the Syrian society and population, including Christians, in all parts of the country.
4. Neither do we forget the recent violent eruptions and grave breaches of security that have occurred in Lebanon; incidents that have left a large number of victims. The most serious of these is the ongoing violent conflict in the town of Ersal (north-east of the country). This is notwithstanding the grave consequences of the huge influx of Syrian and Iraqi refugees as well as the threat to attack churches in certain regions.
5. In view of all this, we are issuing this urgent appeal to inform you that the above-mentioned factors, among others, have rendered the existential threat

¹ The Supreme Council is the highest representative body of all the Evangelical and Protestant denominations in Syria and Lebanon.

² See for example: the statements by the Chaldean Patriarch Sako of Baghdad (Aug. 7, 2014) and that of the meeting of Eastern Patriarchs at Diman, Lebanon (Aug. 7, 2014); as well as those of the *Arab Group for Christian Muslim Dialogue* (July 23, 2014) and the *International Congress of Islamic Scholars* (July 23, 2014).

facing the future of Middle Eastern minorities, as well as moderate Muslim majorities in the region, a very real danger.

6. For us, this is a moment filled with awe and fear! Thus we move to announce a “state of emergency” in order to preserve what remains of the Christian – and moderate non-Christian – presence in the East, and to circumvent its complete demise.
7. The issue of Christian presence in the Middle East has gone beyond the stage of calling for equal rights and protection from persecution. It has become a cry of warning before further events cause the annihilation of Christian presence in the Middle East.
8. Accordingly, and in view of our awareness of the dangers of the present crisis, and in compassion with the sufferings and tragedies our peoples are facing, we urge our partners in ministry, being the entire community of Evangelical and Protestant Churches across the world, as well as all their social and humanitarian organizations, to act as soon as possible in order to:

First: Quickly urge governments and decision makers in your countries to

- a) Raise the awareness of all to the immanent dangers of the situation.
- b) Act immediately to stop the depletion, as well as the forced and ordered displacement of individuals and communities from their homelands, under the threat of arms.
- c) Work for a long term strategy aimed at putting an end to the phenomena of cruel violence and indiscriminate murder, as well as the ejection of individuals and peoples from the Middle East. The long-standing and historic fabric of peaceful communal living between the various social components of the Middle East is fast eroding. It desperately needs to be halted.

9. We grab this opportunity to urge the Evangelical and Protestant churches all over the world, as well as their social and humanitarian organizations, to exercise the maximum pressure, moral and otherwise, and to tap all the resources at their disposal, in order to ensure that the moral values and human principles of their societies and countries prevail over political and temporal interests. We believe that you, our partners, are able to, and should, engage yourselves in this respect. This is especially important with regard to halting the flow of finances and arms to the “takfiri” and radical groups. We urge you to influence these governments in order to put pressure on the international and regional powers that support these radicals.

10. **Second:** A well-thought out strategy needs to be put in place in order to support Christian presence in the East, as well as the presence of other moderate components in the region. This is necessary so that these communities may continue to be agents of spreading the culture of love, peace

and human rights, as well as intellectual, educational and religious pluralism. This has been, and must continue to be, achieved through the strengthening of educational and social institutions that have, and continue to contribute vigorously to the rejection of radicalism and violence, as well as reinforcement of the values of justice, peace, and respectful acceptance for the different other.

11. **Third:** Humanitarian aid to victims of the ongoing violence is urgently needed. We urge our partners to offer food and water supplies, as well as medical and other forms of assistance, to the war victims, and to support those who have been forcefully displaced in their own homeland, or become refugees in neighboring countries, so they may safely return to their towns, villages and churches.³

12. Divine love, incarnate on the cross, causes in us deep sadness and moves us to prayer. It is this same love that urges us to send this appeal, and to work on behalf of those who have been tortured, kidnapped and rendered homeless, as well as for the families of those who were killed or murdered in the absurd wars in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and other countries of our region. We must work together to heal the wounds and to preserve what is left of the Christian community in those lands. We also must work towards strengthening our sustainable joint communal living with our Muslim brothers and sisters in spite of the widening confessional conflicts and the ever-growing cycle of senseless violence.

13. Our hope is that you act swiftly before it is too late. You are indeed our partners in faith, and partnership in Christianity is based on solidarity and fellowship, and on supporting each other faithfully and sincerely, for the sake of a common Christian witness, and in obedience to the commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Beirut, Lebanon
29 August, 2014

**Rev. Dr. Salim Sahiouny, President
Supreme Council of the Evangelical
Community in Syria and Lebanon**

**Rev. Samuel Hanna, Vice President
Supreme Council of the Evangelical
Community in Syria and Lebanon**

**Rev. Megrditch Karageozian, General Sec.
Supreme Council of the Evangelical
Community in Syria and Lebanon
President, Union of Armenian Evangelical
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**Rev. Dr. Habib Badr, Senior Pastor
National Evangelical Church of Beirut**

³ To inquire about ways of support, kindly contact the Supreme Council at the address below

**Rev. Charles Costa,
Exec. Comm. member
Pastor, Baptist Evangelical Church of Ras Beirut**

**Rev. Imad Zoorob,
Exec. Comm. member
Pastor, All Saints Episcopal Church, Beirut**

**Rev. Sami Dagher,
Exec. Comm. Member
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**Rev. Salim Sabounji, Pastor
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**Rev. Andrew Salameh, District Superintendent
Nazarean Evangelical Church of Lebanon**

**Rev. Edward Awabdeh
Evangelical Christian Alliance Church
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**Brother Fuad Al Masri, President
National Evangelical Church of Bludan, Syria**

**Mr. Tony Manasseh, Stated Clerk
Friends (Quakers) Community, Lebanon**

**Mr. Jean Dagher
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Supreme Council of the Evang. Community
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**Rev. Jonas Weiss-Lange, Pastor
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**Rev. Said (Joy) Mallouh, President
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**Rev. Levon Maksoudian,
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**Rev. Joseph Kazzi, President
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**Rev. Daas Haddad, President
Evangelical Baptist Union of Syria**

**Rev. Joseph Najem, President
Free Evangelical Church in Syria and
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**Brother Elias Saqr, General Secretary
Brethren Evangelical Church of Lebanon**

**Rev. Joseph Kassab, President
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**Judge Fawzi Dagher
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**Dr. Nabil Costa, General Secretary
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