



ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL
ORTHODOX BISHOPS
OF NORTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA

Office of the Secretariat

April 26, 2013

The Honorable John Kerry
United States Secretary of State

Dear Secretary Kerry,

We, the Members of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America, kindly bring to your attention the urgent and very serious plight of the Greek Orthodox and Syriac Orthodox Archbishops of Aleppo, Paul Yazigi and Yohanna Ibrahim, who were abducted this past week by “a terrorist group” in the village of Kfar Dael as they were carrying out humanitarian work.

Since the outbreak of the civil war in Syria, religious minorities have not only come under increasing attacks by Islamic fundamentalist rebels, but also have been caught in the crossfire of the opposing factions. As you well know, on April 22, 2013, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom released a report entitled *Protecting and Promoting Religious Freedom in Syria*. Religious minorities, including the Christian population, have been targeted for extinction in an attempt to create an Islamic State in Syria and to impose Sharia Law as the law of the land. To that end, Christian clerics have been kidnapped and murdered, even as they tried to bring aid and comfort to their people in this war torn country, while others are still missing, taken captive by rebel forces.

We fervently beseech you to immediately call for and actively work towards the immediate release of Archbishops Paul Yazigi and Yohanna Ibrahim, especially as Orthodox Christians around the globe are preparing to celebrate the Resurrection of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on May 5th. We would further hope that the United States government, which has always been a champion of civil rights and religious freedom and defends the dignity and safety of every individual, would exert pressure on all parties in Syria to stop the killing of innocent people and restore freedom of religion and respect for all religious minorities.

We are indebted to you and others within the administration for your tireless efforts. As Orthodox Christians, the most appropriate way to express this appreciation is to continue to pray for all our civil authorities. *May the Lord bless and keep you: The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you: The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.* (OT Book of Numbers 6:24-26).

Archbishop Demetrios, Chairman of the Assembly of Bishops
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

Metropolitan Philip, 1st Vice Chairman of the Assembly of Bishops
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of New York and all North America

Archbishop Justinian, 2nd Vice Chairman of the Assembly of Bishops
Russian Orthodox Church in the USA

Bishop Basil, Secretary of the Assembly of Bishops
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America

Metropolitan Antony, Treasurer of the Assembly of Bishops
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA Eastern Eparchy

Metropolitan Iakovos
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago

Metropolitan Methodios
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston

Metropolitan Isaiah
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Denver

Metropolitan Alexios
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta

Metropolitan Nicholas
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Detroit

Metropolitan Savas
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh

Metropolitan Gerasimos
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco

Metropolitan Evangelos
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey

Bishop Andonios
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

Bishop Demetrios
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago

Bishop Sevastianos
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

Metropolitan Athenagoras
Holy Metropolis of Mexico

Metropolitan Nikitas
Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute in Berkley, CA

Bishop Gregory
American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of the USA

Bishop Daniel
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA Western Eparchy

Bishop Ilia
Albanian Orthodox Diocese

Archbishop Joseph
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Diocese of Los Angeles and the West

Bishop Antoun
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Diocese of Miami and the Southeast

Bishop Thomas
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Diocese of Charleston, Oakland and the Mid-Atlantic

Bishop Alexander
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada & Upstate New York

Bishop John
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Diocese of Worcester and New England

Bishop Anthony
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest

Bishop Nicholas
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, Bishop of Brooklyn and Assistant to the Metropolitan

Metropolitan Hilarion
Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, Eastern America and New York Diocese

Archbishop Alypy
Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, Chicago and Mid-America Diocese

Archbishop Kyrill
Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, San Francisco and Western America Diocese

Bishop Peter
Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, Administrator of Chicago and Mid-America Diocese

Bishop Theodosy
Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, Vicar - San Francisco and Western America Diocese

Bishop George
Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, Vicar - Eastern America Diocese

Bishop Jerome
Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

Bishop John
Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, Bishop-in-Charge of Old Ritualist Parishes

Bishop Longin
Serbian Orthodox Church, Chicago and Mid-America Diocese

Bishop Mitrophan
Serbian Orthodox Church, Eastern American Diocese

Bishop Maxim
Serbian Orthodox Church, Western American Diocese

Archbishop Nicolae
Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

Bishop Ioan Casian
Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

Metropolitan Joseph
Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Church of the USA, Canada, and Australia

Bishop Daniil
Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Church of the USA, Canada, and Australia

Metropolitan Dimitri
Georgian Orthodox Church, Dioceses of Batumi & Lazeti and America

Metropolitan Tikhon
Orthodox Church in America, Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.

Archbishop Nathaniel
Orthodox Church in America, Romanian Orthodox Episcopate

Archbishop Nikon
Orthodox Church in America, Diocese of New England and Albanian Archdiocese

Archbishop Benjamin
Orthodox Church in America, Diocese of San Francisco and the West

Bishop Melchisedek
Orthodox Church in America, Diocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania

Bishop Michael
Orthodox Church in America, Diocese of New York and New Jersey

Bishop Alexander
Orthodox Church in America, Bulgarian Diocese

Bishop Irineu
Orthodox Church in America, Romanian Orthodox Episcopate

Bishop Mark
Orthodox Church in America

Metropolitan Sotirios
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto

Bishop Christoforos
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto

Metropolitan Yurij
Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Canada

Bishop Ilarion
Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Canada

Bishop Andriy
Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Canada

Archbishop Gabriel
Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

Bishop Iov
Russian Orthodox Church

Bishop Georgije
Serbian Orthodox Church

Bishop Irénée
Orthodox Church in America, Archdiocese of Ottawa and Canada

Bishop Pankratij
Holy Metropolis of Mexico

Metropolitan Antonio
Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of Mexico, Venezuela, Central America & the
Caribbean

Bishop Ignatius
Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of Mexico, Venezuela, Central America & the
Caribbean

Archbishop Alejo, Exarchate of Mexico
Orthodox Church in America

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