



Supreme Council of the
Evangelical Community in Syria and Lebanon
P.O Box 70 / 1065
Antelias
Lebanon

Brussels, 5 March 2015

Dear sisters and brothers,

The brutal hostage-taking by IS of dozens of Assyrian Christians has once again drawn our attention to the situation in which Christians and other minority groups find themselves in Syria and the broader region.

After the letter we wrote to you in September last year, the situation has only further deteriorated as the war in Syria is entering its fourth year. According to estimates of the United Nations some 6.5 million Syrians are displaced within Syria. Another three million refugees have crossed into neighbouring countries and are placed in refugee camps in the region, a large number of these in camps in Lebanon. We hear reports about the desperate situation in which these refugees find themselves. A situation which is aggravated by the wintery weather conditions. We are very distressed by this.

Following the Urgent Appeal that you issued mid-2014, the United Protestant Church in Belgium wrote to the Belgian government urging them, among other things, to increase humanitarian aid. The then Prime Minister was quick to respond and informed us that they increased the humanitarian aid budget for the region.

At the same time, our church organised a collection for the work of Action by Churches Together in your part of the world. The proceeds of this nation-wide collection will be transferred to ACT this week (as the action ended on 1st March).

For us in the United Protestant Church in Belgium the suffering of your people comes 'close to home' as Belgium hosts a sizeable community of Assyrians. In some of our member parishes, like in the town of Mechelen, 40% of the parishioners consist of Assyrian Christians. Also because of this reason, we feel closely related to suffering of the people in and from Syria.

At our Synodal Council meeting last week, we started the first session with the reading of Psalm 2 after which we kept some minutes of silent prayer for your people. At that moment, we felt close to you and we will continue to uphold the people in and from Syria in our prayers.

In this period of Lent when we remember the suffering of Christ, we realise once more that the cross of Christ is surrounded by millions of other crosses, and we ask: "How long, oh Lord..."

Yours in the suffering and resurrected Christ,

Steven H. Fuite
President of the Synodal Council