



❖ *The Holy Synod of the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East* ❖

OFFICE OF THE LOCUM TENENS OF THE PATRIARCHAL SEE

STATEMENT OF THE COUNCIL OF HIERARCHS OF THE ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST

In this will My Father be glorified, that you bring forth much fruit, and that you remain my disciples (John 15:8)

In the Name of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; One God, forever.

By the grace of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Council of Hierarchs of the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East convened at the episcopal residence in Nohadra (Dohuk), the Kurdistan Regional Government, Iraq, from June 2-5, 2015. It was presided by His Beatitude Mar Aprem, Metropolitan of All India and *Locum Tenens* of the Patriarchal See of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, with the participation of all the metropolitans and bishops of the Assyrian Church of the East worldwide, who gathered in a harmonious and fraternal spirit.

The Council began its working sessions with prayer and thanksgiving to God on behalf of all of His graces and spiritual gifts towards, while seeking the Lord's heavenly direction that this Council might be for the giving of hope to the Holy Church and her faithful children, who have participated and supported their shepherds with prayer for the welfare of the Church, our spiritual Mother.

The Council offered fervent prayer to God the Almighty Father for the repose of the soul of the thrice-blessed Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV, of holy memory, in thanksgiving for having pastored the Church as Catholicos-Patriarch for almost 39 years. The fathers of the Council sought the prayers of the late patriarch, who by his dedicated pastoral guidance and wise leadership presided over the holy synods of the Church in a conciliar and paternal spirit, promoting peace and fraternity among its members, proving to be of the utmost benefit for all the Holy Church for some four decades.

1. The Council of Hierarchs discussed in depth the difficult conditions which the peoples of the region of the Middle East were forced to enter, particularly in Iraq and Syria, which represent the Church of the East and the Christian East at large historically and foundationally, and its deep presence, enriching the region and its peoples who are known by their ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity in a peaceful co-existence that makes known this national, religious and cultural diversity in a manner that is positive and supportive, proving fruitful for the development of civilization and human heritage.

The Council discussed the matters which presently threaten this enriching diversity and co-existence producing a state of instability in the region and bloody war which has caused great losses to countless innocent victims, mass exodus and forced immigration of millions of people from their



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homeland to neighboring countries, not to mention the great devastation of infrastructure, economy and historical heritage which has forced the entire region into chaos.

2. The Council of Hierarchs, faithful to the saving Gospel of Christ, continually proclaims peace and respect for the human being without distinction of identity, creed or opinion, and it confirms the stance of the Church that death and war are not the proper and acceptable means to a lasting resolution. Rather, dialogue and tolerance of the other are genuine and lasting resolutions to these conflicts.

From this very position, the Council of Hierarchs invites all sides of this on-going conflict who are at odds with one another to dialogue and to a national acceptance based on the dignity of the human person as the image and likeness of God, being above any other form of dignity. Thus, the diversity of ideas and dogma, which can be negatively utilized by the forces of evil and darkness to afflict and sow discord among peoples, ought to be utterly surpassed.

3. Again, the Council of Hierarchs calls upon governmental and political authorities in these countries, as well as the legislative and executive bodies, to fully investigate the sources and root-causes of these conflicts by means of discussion of the laws, constitutions and curriculum of teaching and instructional institutions, as well as media outlets, the religious pulpit, etc., all of which proclaim and make real the culture of forgiveness and the acceptance of one another.

4. The Council also discussed the human disaster forced upon migrants and the displaced. The hierarchs offer their gratitude and thanks to the officials of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq and to the government of the Republic of Lebanon for their great diligence in lessening the burden of this catastrophe which has befallen those forced to migrate and have become displaced from their homes and villages, though their economic resources are limited in the face of the great number of the displaced and their many needs. The Council further offers its thanks to the various Churches and human aid organizations within these countries, in the region and in the world at large. It is our hope that the international community will also realize in kind its own role in alleviating the plight of the millions who have been forced to leave their homes and villages.

5. The Council of Hierarchs offers fervent prayers and supplications on behalf of the captives and kidnapped, among which include entire families, children, the elderly and women from all origins and places. Particularly, the Council calls for the immediate and safe release of the over 200 hundred sons and daughters of the Assyrian Church of the East from the villages of the Khabur River Valley in Syria held captive, who are all innocent and peace-loving people. Prayers are further offered for the safe return of the two kidnapped bishops, metropolitan Mar Gregorious Yohanna Ibrahim and Metropolitan Paul Yazigi, as well as Fr. Jaques Morad and other clergy who are held against their will, in the hope that they will be released safe and sound.

6. Concerning the affairs of Assyrian Church of the East, and specifically the important matter of the election and ordination of the new Catholicos-Patriarch for the holy and apostolic see of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the Council of Hierarchs discerns and realizes its obedience to the command of Christ our



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Lord and Savior: “*That they may all be one*” (John 17:21). The Council finds it proper and meet to give sufficient time at the present juncture to dialogue and realize the unity of the two branches of the Church of the East, namely the Assyrian Church of the East and the Ancient Church of the East, by rehabilitating formal talks and efforts for reunification that have ceased for many years now.

Therefore, the Council of Hierarchs has unanimously decided to presently postpone the election of the new Catholicos-Patriarch, now to take place on September 16, 2015, followed by the ordination of the patriarch-elect on Sunday, September 27, 2015 in Erbil, Iraq. The Council requests that the clergy and faithful of both Churches fervently pray to the Lord for the unity of the Church and for the election and ordination of the new Catholicos-Patriarch, who will be elected by the Holy Spirit from among the hierarchs of the Church meeting in council in mid-September of this year. The Holy Church will work towards making this council the one and only unified Council of Hierarchs for the greater glory or the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and for the good of the Holy Church.

7. The Council expresses its gratitude to the officials of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq for the reception and hospitality accorded to the members of the Council during their stay in Iraq, and for the accommodations extended to the Council, and for its commitment to meet the needs of the Church in the region.

8. Also, the Council of Hierarchs offers its thanks to the hierarchs and clergy of the sister Churches who joined the hierarchs of the Assyrian Church of the East and their conciliar work in prayer and solicitude. Particular thanks and heartfelt gratitude are extended to the clergy and faithful of the Assyrian Church of the East worldwide for their support and prayers for the Council of Hierarchs during the course of the council meetings this past week.

9. In conclusion, thanks are expressed by the Council to His Beatitude Mar Gewargis Sliwa, the Metropolitan of Iraq, and to His Grace Mar Isaac Yousif, the Bishop of Nohadra and Erbil for the hospitality accorded to all the hierarchs present during their stay, and for having made all proper arrangements for the convocation of the Council. We pray that the Lord might bless them with heavenly benediction and good health. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all, forever; Amen.

Given at the episcopal residence of the Assyrian Church of the East, Nohadra (Dohuk), this 5th day of June, 2015 AD.