

To: WCC Member Churches and
Ecumenical Partners

Geneva, 7 August, 2014

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

On behalf of the World Council of Churches, I am writing to solicit your prayers for the Christians, the church communities and all the suffering people on the Plain of Nineveh in northern Iraq, as well as the surrounding region. Reports in recent days have confirmed the forced displacement and indiscriminate killing of Christians, Yazidis, and members of other vulnerable religious and ethnic communities in Iraq as the result of military attacks by the "Islamic State", a group formerly known as the "Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham" (ISIS).

I have communicated with the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr Ban Ki Moon, urging him to deploy all efforts to bring a halt to the violence in Iraq and to ensure the physical protection of all people there and support for their human rights including the right to religious liberty. Now I ask for your support, in prayer and advocacy. Please contact your government officials requesting them to:

- Instruct their UN ambassadors to bring the plight of all vulnerable people and communities in Iraq to the Security Council for immediate protective actions.
- Obtain from the UN Security Council a binding resolution that ensures the immediate safe return of all those who were obliged to flee their homes and properties.
- Double their humanitarian efforts now, including urgent aid for the internally displaced and the refugees in neighbouring countries.

Please do also notify us of your action so that we can inform the churches in Iraq and follow-up on the issue at the United Nations.

In the region that is now Iraq, Christianity took root in the earliest decades of the Christian church, and it is there that some of the most faithful of our communities have flourished to this day. These are the brothers and sisters who are under threat now.

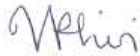
The Chaldean Patriarch of Babylon, Louis Raphael Sako, wrote earlier today that ISIS militants conducted a mortar assault last night that has driven as many as 100,000 Christians from their homes and villages, most fleeing on foot towards Kurdish cities where they hope to take refuge. Those fleeing include the sick and wounded the elderly, infants and pregnant women. The patriarch tells us that there is an urgent need for water, food and shelter.

Churches and property belonging to religious communities are being desecrated and destroyed by ISIS, and ancient manuscripts have been burned as an assault on the people's religious

beliefs. According to the Chaldean archbishop of Kirkuk and Sulaimaniyah, Joseph Thomas, whole towns in northern Iraq have been emptied of their populations.

Let us join in prayer and unite in action to restore these shattered communities, and to aid their people.

In the love and service of Jesus Christ,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'I. Phiri'.

Dr Isabel Apawo Phiri
Associate General Secretary for Public Witness and Diakonia and
Acting General Secretary