

## **STATEMENT OF THE PAN-ORTHODOX EPISCOPAL ASSEMBLY OF BRITAIN AND IRELAND ON THE PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS**

We, bishops of the Orthodox Churches who exercise our ministry in Britain and Ireland, wish to express our prayerful solidarity with the Christians of the Middle East and Africa, who today are experiencing a degree of suffering and overt persecution unprecedented in modern times. The almost daily reports of atrocities, tragic loss of life and displacement of whole populations fill our hearts with sorrow as we witness the systematic destruction of the Christian presence in lands sanctified by centuries of prayer and marked by the peaceful life of these ancient Christian communities. At the same time we are heartened by the courageous witness of those who lay down their lives rather than deny their faith, as well as by the general refusal of the Christian communities to resort to violence.

We call on our clergy and our faithful people to pray fervently for the cessation of violence and for the return of the displaced people to their ancestral homes. Bearing in mind the words of Our Saviour, 'For I was hungry, and you gave me food: I was thirsty, and you gave me drink: I was a stranger, and you took me in' (Mt 25:35), we ask that collections be organised in our churches for those who are suffering.

Addressing ourselves to the Parliaments and Governments of these Islands, we urge that the issue of the persecution of Christians in the Middle East and North Africa and, indeed, throughout the world, should not be ignored. Serious diplomatic and political efforts must be made to avert further suffering of innocent people and to establish just solutions to the problems which have arisen in recent years, without which there can be no lasting peace and security for anyone.

+ GREGORIOS, Archbishop of Thyateira & Great Britain (Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople)

+ ELISEY, Archbishop of Sourozh (Patriarchate of Moscow)

+ MARK, Archbishop of Berlin, Germany & Great Britain (Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia)

+ KALLISTOS, Metropolitan of Diokleia (Archdiocese of Thyateira)

+ ATHANASIOS, Bishop of Tropaeou (Archdiocese of Thyateira)

+ANATOLY, Archbishop of Kerch (Patriarchate of Moscow)

+ IGNATIE, Bishop of Mures (Romanian Diocese of Spain and Portugal)

London, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015