



November 22, 2016

President-Elect Donald J. Trump
725 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear President-Elect Trump:

We are deeply appreciative of your post-election commitment to base policies of your Administration on a respectful hearing of varying points of view. Trusting that spirit, we share with you our deep concerns about the Syrian people and the policies of our government that will affect them.

The Syria-Lebanon Partnership Network for which we speak is a fellowship within the 1.3 million member Presbyterian Church (USA). The 180-year involvement of our denomination in the Middle East has fostered many educational and medical institutions that are among the best in the region. But our greatest ties to the area are the churches we helped to establish and to which we relate today. These faithful people and their Christian and Muslim neighbors provide the lens through which we view the current tragedy of Syria.

We and they recognize that previous and current actions and policies of the United States and other governments have contributed to the greatest humanitarian crisis of our time. The present war has killed over 500,000 people; half the Syrian population has been made homeless; millions have become refugees in surrounding countries and Europe. The flight and overwhelming need of so many has infected the relationships of people and nations around the world.

Since our country has been one of the forces involved in creating and furthering this tragedy, we urge that ending the Syrian conflict be an immediate priority of your Administration. And we suggest that new policies to accomplish that be built upon the following specific actions. The U.S. Government should:

1. Work with other regional and international actors to establish in Syria a ceasefire while a permanent commitment to armistice is negotiated that involves all parties. This should not be made contingent on resolving all differences and grievances or a final polity but simply to end hostilities with a "halt-in-place" while negotiations about the long-term future continue, facilitated when needed by the international community.
2. Cease supplying weapons, military training and funding to combatants in the region, and assure that private U.S. corporations be barred also from such activities.
3. Assure that military aid previously provided to other countries in the region not be made available to any parties to the conflict in Syria.
4. Use all diplomatic and financial measures we can exert to pressure other countries to adhere also to such policies.

5. Lead other governments and international agencies in sharply increasing humanitarian aid to displaced persons within Syria and refugees who have fled the terror and tragedy of war. Such action must include our country receiving a much larger number of these refugees.

These steps will help to create space for Syrians to decide for themselves what the future of their country will be, and to invite, as needed, any international facilitation assistance. This is the plea we have heard most clearly from our Syrian friends. They are confident that they can resolve their own internal conflicts if foreign intervention is ended.

We urge that your Administration adopt a new approach to Syria with policies crafted along these lines.

Sincerely,

Tim McCalmont

Rev. Tim McCalmont, Moderator
Syria-Lebanon Partnership Network of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.
P.O. Box 2128
Costa Mesa, CA 92628-2128

Cc: Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson II, Stated Clerk, Presbyterian Church (USA)
Mr. Tony De La Rosa, Interim Executive Director, Presbyterian Mission Agency
Rev. Phillip Woods, Presbyterian World Mission Coordinator for Middle East and Europe