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CATHOLICOS-PATRIARCH OF THE HOLY APOSTOLIC CATHOLIC ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST

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August 6, 2014

His Excellency Ban Ki-Moon Secretary General of the United Nations UN Headquarters First Avenue at 46th St. New York, NY 10017

Dear Excellency:

The grave situation which our Christian communities in Iraq are suffering constrains me to write to Your Excellency as the Secretary General of the United Nations Organization. I join my fellow patriarchs and hierarchs of Christian Churches of Iraq, and in the Middle East at large, in voicing our serious concern for the peril of our people and faithful. This plea cannot go unheard by the United Nations!

The plight of the ancient Christian communities in Mosul, Iraq, and its environs is a situation by now well known to Your Excellency and to all of the member-states of the United Nations. At the outset, let me thank you for the letter of July 20, 2014 issued by the Secretary General's office and the follow-up letter issued by the Presidency of the Security Council on July 21, 2014, both of which condemn in categorical and unequivocal terms the atrocities committed against the Christians of Iraq by the militant, fundamentalist and terrorist Islamist group known as 'ISIS' (now, 'IS'). The destruction and havoc which has been reeked by this lawless group upon the Christians, and now other religious minority groups in the country, has been documented and made known to the world.

The plight of our ancient Christian communities in Iraq, particularly the Assyrians and the Chaldean, Syriac and Armenian communities, has caused the forced displacement of thousands of persons. Women, children and the elderly have left their homes and continually on the move—from city to city, and from village to village—seeking safety for their lives. We are informed by our prelates in Iraq that as the present situation and conditions continue to go from bad to worse; people are living in great fear and confusion, without any hope for a brighter and better future. Christianity has been present in the ancient city of Mosul, known formerly as 'Nineveh,' the capital of the ancient Assyrian Empire, since the preaching of the very Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ in the first half of the first Christ century. Today, not a Christian is present, and what's more, the ancient churches and relics of our faith have been destroyed before the very eyes of the major countries of the modern civilized West—indeed, before the eyes of the world! This is a great travesty not only against the Christian faith and its adherents, but against the ancient patrimony of civilization of which the city of Mosul (Nineveh) has been a living witness until very recent.

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Your Excellency: the United Nations as an international body is well aware of the anti-human and criminal acts perpetrated by the this terrorist group known as 'ISIS' against the Christians of Iraq, and now other against other religious minorities such as the Yezidis, Shabaks, Kurds as well as the Shia and non-compliant Sunni citizens of Iraq. The world, and much less the United Nations, cannot stand by with obvious complacency and apathy towards our plight and allow this destruction of these peoples in Iraq. Mere statements of condemnation by the UN, and even of the major countries of the West, are not sufficient! These statements, though taken with gratitude, are not enough to bring an end to these atrocities and to stop this genocide of a religious nature!

Therefore, Your Excellency, on behalf of the thousands of displaced Christians of Iraq—the children, women and elderly—and on behalf of those who have already paid with their lives and the blood of their necks for their faith: I implore the United Nations to take concrete and statutory action in a plenary session of the member-states of the United Nations against the perpetrators of these crimes against humanity; I implore the Security Council to take a positive vote in favor of these persecuted Christians who are suffering a new and modern genocide. The lives of this persecuted and oppressed people depend upon the moral decisions of the United Nations in favor of protecting human life and the right of each and every person to worship God and follow his/her conscience.

Time is of the essence, Your Excellency! The United Nations must act quickly to halt and remedy this dire and bloody situation for the Christians in Iraq. If no concrete action is taken very soon, then I must say that the United Nations and its member-states will have failed in fulfilling their mandate of preserving life and peace in the world. This would be a grave and inexcusable moral violation, which we all pray and hope is avoided. I am ready to afford my Church's support in meeting and/or being a part of Your Excellency's solution to this crisis. I shall keep Your Excellency in my prayers, as you fulfill your important mandate of moderating the United Nations. May Almighty God grant His enduring peace throughout the world and among all peoples.

*Khanania MARDINKHA

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