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 THE ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST:  
 DIOCESES OF WESTERN USA, CALIFORNIA AND EASTERN USA



**HIERARCHICAL STATEMENT OF THE BISHOPS OF THE DIOCESES OF THE  
 ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST IN THE UNITED STATES  
 CONCERNING RECENT VIOLENT EVENTS IN THE US**

*For Immediate Release*

Over the past week, we have all witnessed disastrous events in our country that have caused both outrage and heartache to all of us as citizens of this great country. On May 25<sup>th</sup>, the meaningless and outrageous death of the late George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, at the hands of a police officer who acted maliciously in betrayal of his oath to serve and protect the citizens has caused shock to all of us. As Christians and as human beings who adhere to a higher moral standard, one that is given by God Himself as the Creator and Author of all life, we are calling out for justice and the condemnation of such a heinous act by our country’s judicial system.

The heartless treatment of a citizen by one who was called to serve the community with selfless sacrifice has sparked a wave of protests across our nation, in countless cities and townships. Peaceful and constructive protests, in accord with the laws of our land, serve not merely to vent the anger which many moral-minded citizens feel at this callous and inhumane taking of an innocent life of a fellow citizen, but it is the moral obligation and duty of a concerned and involved citizenry to publicly express the collective conscience of the nation in the face of injustices, most especially at the blatant disregard for precious human life. Thus, we pray for the repose of the soul of the late

George Floyd, and we equally pray for his family members and friends who are grieving the heartbreaking loss of his life.

However, the present dismay and anger of our fellow citizens can also run the risk of morphing into violent confrontations, riots, looting and the wholesale destruction of the property of private citizens. Sadly, we are experiencing this confusion and loss of innocent lives in many of our cities today as an aftermath, and indeed the tragic death of the late retired police Captain David Dorn of St. Louis on June 2<sup>nd</sup> attests to this sad fact. This too must be condemned as an affront to the most basic right of our fellow citizens—the right to life. In the free expression of our own rights, however, we must be cognizant and careful enough not to tread on the rights of others. We call upon our fellow citizens to exercise restraint and prudence in the framework of peaceful and meaningful protests, and not in the destruction of personal and public property, for such behavior never serves the purposes of peace and justice in our or any society.

As Christians, whether faithful of the Assyrian Church of the East or of other Christian denominations, we are called to be beacons of the light and salvation of Christ to all men. The Gospel teaches us that we have the important vocation to be the ‘salt of the earth’ and the ‘light of the world’ (cf. St. Matthew 5:13, 14). We must not *conform* to the ways of the world, but rather *transform* the ways of the world by our Christian living and witness. Further, we are called to bring the healing of Christ to a broken world, marred by sin and strife, and particularly to make that healing power of our Savior real and present in our communities, neighborhoods and our society as a whole.

It is obvious to all of us that two great sins are plaguing our nation today: the bold disregard for human life, and the utter contempt for our brother, which is most especially expressed in the ugliness of racism and racial bigotry. The Holy Scriptures teach us that we are all created in the image and likeness of God equally, and that Christ died to bring salvation to all men—irrespective of race or social class. We realize that this is a sin which our nation has experienced for centuries, and we are still struggling with racial bigotry even in our own day. However, this and other social evils and ills can only be healed when we as Christians actively bring the reconciliatory message of the Gospel to our fellow citizens and to our communities. This healing consists of fostering understanding of each other as a unique creature in the eyes of God, of forgiving one another for our past and present societal sins, and in loving our neighbor unconditionally with our whole heart by desiring his/her good.

The role of Churches and faith leaders across our country is vital in fostering these elements of healing for our broken and divided society today. Violence is not, and can never be, the answer to addressing our social ills. Rather, violence only serves to widen the gap between fellow citizens which already exists, making it much more difficult for each of us to reach out and touch the hand of our brother and sister. Therefore, let us all—whether faith leaders, elected civil servants, community activists and citizens of good will—play our unique and indispensable role in promoting peace and understanding among our fellow Americans.

As a people who have historically experienced injustice and discrimination due to our Christian faith and our Assyrian identity. Thus, we call upon all of our faithful to pray for the those who have tragically been deprived of their lives due to violence and hatred. Do your utmost to foster reconciliation and forgiveness among your friends, neighbors and in your communities across our country. Respect each other as true brothers and sisters in Christ by your words and actions, and remember that you are an ancient nation which has made many great contributions to human society since millennia past.

May we all together, as individuals and collectively as American citizens, offer repentance before God for our lack of love for one another. Now is the time that our nation must begin to heal itself from these present wounds of hatred and apathy for each another, but it can only be done when we as Christians make Christ present in the world in which we are living today. We three diocesan hierarchs ask that this coming Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, which is the commemoration of all catholicoi-patriarchs who guided our holy Church—special prayers be held in all of our parishes across the nation for an outpouring of peace and reconciliation in our country.

May the Lord bless each and every one of us, irrespective of our race—for God loves all of us equally and looks upon all races which He created with impartiality—so that we may we begin to truly love our neighbor with our whole self. May God bless America! The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God the Father, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and at all times, and forever and ever. Amen.

*Given on this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of June, in the year of Our Lord 2020:-*

**✠Aprim Khamis**  
*Bishop of Western USA*



**✠Awa Royel**  
*Bishop of California*



**✠Paulus Benjamin**  
*Bishop of Eastern USA*

