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Joint Statement by the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Syria



Damascus, December 29, 2024

At this historic moment, as Syria is undergoing a new transition, we, the heads of the Christian Churches in Syria, address the public with a message of love and hope. This message springs from our sense of responsibility and our deep faith in the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who blessed the peacemakers and called them children of God (Matthew 5:9). During this Holy Nativity season, Christ calls us to be messengers of peace on earth.

Today, we stand on the threshold of a new era that requires all of us to have humility, courage, and determination to build the Syria of the future. This new phase calls for a commitment to a culture of dialogue and openness to others. It demands wisdom, deliberation, and foresight as well as the ability to avoid getting caught up in pointless disputes, populism, or isolation.

As Christians, we have a vital and pivotal role to play in this phase by cooperating with everyone to advance and rebuild this homeland.

We recognize that our spiritual, moral, and national responsibility compels us to always raise the voice of truth, defend human dignity under all circumstances, and strongly strive to support the path of democracy, freedom, independence, and peace, which ensures the rights and dignity of all Syrians.

Our message today is based on four key axes:

Reconciliation,

Appeal to the World to Lift External Economic Sanctions,
Partnership,
Hope.

First: National Reconciliation and Dialogue as a Path to Unity

Syria is a nation with a human and civilizational identity, built upon a history and geography that have evolved over the ages. However, it has remained steadfast in its will for coexistence to ensure common interests. The ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity that has characterized Syria's local communities is a source of its wealth and strength. Today, Syria is called to reclaim its role as an active member of the international community and to strengthen its belonging to its broader geographical and Arab surroundings.

To achieve this, we call for:

• Launching a comprehensive national dialogue that brings together all spectrums and components of society, fosters trust and social cohesion, addresses the roots of conflict, and redefines Syria's national identity based on common values: citizenship, dignity, freedom, and coexistence.

• Initiating dialogue workshops at the local level across all provinces, cities, and villages to address challenges affecting social cohesion and coexistence, achieve genuine reconciliation in areas where reconciliation and transparency are needed, and enable communities themselves to work toward shared recovery throughout Syria.

• Building trust among all Syrians through developmental community projects that contribute to rebuilding the social fabric and enhancing a shared sense of belonging to one united state.

• Reviving the spirit of coexistence, which has always been part of our Syrian heritage. This includes working to eliminate prejudices and countering exclusionary rhetoric, hate speech, and discrimination, as vengeance and resentment do not build a nation.

• Collaborating to enhance security and safety to ensure the well-being of all citizens and to solidify civil peace.

Second: An Appeal to the World to Lift External Economic Sanctions

Syria has recently endured economic sanctions, as well as an economic blockade. This has affected Syrian citizens from all spectrums. These sanctions have negatively impacted the local community in Syria and neighboring communities, which were also affected by migration. Their repercussions have extended to countries receiving Syrians, whether through legal or illegal migration. Hence, we call upon the international community to act swiftly to lift these unjust sanctions, support the path of reconstruction and economic recovery, and create job opportunities.

Third: Participation in Drafting a New Constitution for the Country

We believe that drafting a new constitution that reflects the aspirations of Syrians is key to building a modern and democratic state. Therefore, we emphasize:

• The necessity for the constitution-drafting process to be inclusive and comprehensive, involving all components of Syrian society, including various ethnicities, denominations, men and women, young and old, to ensure the constitution represents the will of the people in all its diversity.

• Adherence of the constitution to the principles of citizenship, guaranteeing human rights, the rule of law, and the separation of powers, while respecting public and individual freedoms, including freedom of opinion and belief, as well as the inclusion of women.

• Adoption of values of justice and equality in the constitution, as the foundation for building a state that offers equal opportunities to all its citizens, without any discrimination, in political, social, and economic life.

Fourth: Hope for a Bright Future

We believe that a new Syria should remain united and serve as a model of a modern state founded on the principles of citizenship, democracy, and human rights. Hence, we affirm our vision for the Syria of tomorrow:

• A united, sovereign, and independent Syria that preserves the dignity of every citizen, regardless of religion, denomination, ethnicity, or political affiliation.

• A Syria governed by a constitution that ensures the rule of law, equality before the law, separation of powers, and respect for diversity and freedoms.

• A Syria where everyone, particularly women and youth, actively participates in building the future.

• A Syria where the state maintains an equal distance from all religions and denominations, with a constitution guaranteeing the state’s neutrality towards religion and religious institutions. This ensures the separation of state institutions from religious institutions and prevents the misuse of authority for religious purposes or the exploitation of religion for political gain.

A Call to Commitment and Action

We, the heads of Christian Churches present in Syria for nearly two millennia, call upon all Syrians, at home and abroad, to work hand in hand to realize this vision and bring it to life. We also urge our Christian faithful not to retreat into isolation or fear but to engage actively in the public sphere, moved by the spirit of the Gospel, so they may be partners in building a new Syria. We also appeal to the international community to stand with the Syrians in rebuilding their homeland within its internationally recognized borders, to prevent any external violations on national sovereignty, and to lift the sanctions imposed on them so that they may freely and independently rebuild their country and its people.

We believe that God, Who brought us together in this land, from which civilizations and faith-based messages originated, will bless our efforts and guide us on the path to peace. Let us lift up our hearts and hands to Him, reconcile with one another, and seek from Him strength and wisdom to move forward. Let us be peacemakers, carrying the hope of Christ and remaining faithful to His message of reconciliation, fraternal love, and peace on earth.

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Syriac Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, and Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church

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