

# United Nations Nations Unies

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Excellency,

I refer to your letter dated 21 May addressed to the Secretary-General, in which you expressed the grave concern of the Interparliamentary Assembly Orthodoxy about the situation of the Christian community in Syria, in particular the kidnapping and ongoing captivity of Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim and Bishop Boulos Yazigi in Syria. I fully share your deep concern for their well-being and safety.

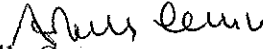
The situation in Syria is indeed a human tragedy, which has resulted in well over 70,000 killed, displacement of thousands and destruction of cities and villages as well as Syria's rich and diverse cultural heritage. We are also concerned by the increasing sectarian overtones and the involvement of foreign fighters in the conflict. The United Nations has continuously condemned the violence irrespective of its perpetrator and called for a political solution to the conflict in Syria. We believe that the recent initiative by the Russian Federation and the United States of America to bring the Syrian parties to a negotiating table is the best opportunity for a negotiated solution we have had in nearly a year, which should be fully supported by all concerned.

As a general principle, the United Nations upholds the obligations of the parties concerned to ensure the safety and security of all civilians in armed conflict in accordance with human rights and international humanitarian law. The United Nations condemns taking of hostages, and calls for the humane treatment, prompt and unconditional release and safe return of any abductees being held against their will.

In spite of the appalling circumstances on the ground, I wish to assure you that the United Nations is doing what it can to end the violence in Syria and secure the release and safe return of Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim and Bishop Boulos Yazigi.

I also wish to reiterate my conviction that the sooner peace and stability are restored in Syria, the more conducive conditions may be for an end to all abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Antonella Caruso  
Director, Middle East and West Asia Division  
Department of Political Affairs