

Statement by Ambassador Bennett on Abduction of Assyrian Christians in Northeast Syria

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News Release

February 28, 2015 - Andrew Bennett, Canada's Ambassador for Religious Freedom, today issued the following statement:

"I was appalled to learn of the mounting number of abductions of Assyrian Christians being reported from Northeast Syria, now estimated at over 220 people, and call for their immediate release.

"These acts provide further evidence of the barbaric campaign of persecution and death being waged by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

"The targeting of the ancient Apostolic Christian communities of the region has been particularly egregious and threatens their very existence. In addition to the violence and displacement perpetrated against these communities, we have witnessed the destruction of irreplaceable cultural artefacts, representing a great loss to the rich and diverse religious heritage of the region. Canada denounces these acts in the strongest possible terms.

"As stated by Minister [of Foreign Affairs Rob] Nicholson earlier this week, Canada supports the aspirations of the Syrian people to establish a stable and democratic society in which all Syrians, regardless of faith or ethnicity, are able to live in peace."

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