

Statement from Minister Paradis Marking Four Years Since Start of Syrian Crisis

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March 15, 2015 - This weekend marks four years since the start of the Syrian crisis. This crisis has created millions of refugees and displaced persons, has led to war crimes and atrocities against innocent civilians, including members of religious minorities, and continues to pose a serious threat to the stability and security of the Middle East. The crisis has also generated a permissive environment allowing terrorist groups such as the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) to expand and pose a threat to the region and to Western nations, including Canada.

This horrific conflict, provoked by a vicious crackdown by President Bashar al-Assad on citizens of his own nation, has resulted in a downward spiral of violence and extremism and a humanitarian crisis of appalling dimensions. According to the United Nations, 12.2 million people inside Syria now require humanitarian assistance. Another 3.8 million people have fled to Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, making this one of the modern era's largest humanitarian catastrophes.

Canada is responding on all fronts—working with displaced persons in Iraq and Syria, supporting refugees in surrounding host countries and using Canada's diplomatic and military power to confront the evil that is ISIL. Our government has also committed to resettling 10,000 more Syrian refugees over the next three years, in addition to our prior commitment of 1,300.

Our government calls on those perpetrating violence in Syria to put down their guns and to respect international law and the inherent human rights of individuals, particularly women and girls.

Our thoughts and prayers remain with those who continue to suffer because of the continued violence, as well as with everyone elsewhere who fears for the health and well-being of friends and relatives in Syria, Iraq and the refugee-hosting nations.

Our efforts in Syria are guided by the basic belief that all human beings are entitled to live in free and democratic societies, where human rights and the rule of law are promoted and respected. The contributions we have made so far are an expression of these values and a clear example of the valuable role that Canada can and must play to alleviate the suffering of those affected by conflict.

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