

Canada Concerned by Reports of Forced Conversions of Syrian Christians

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News Release

September 9, 2013 - Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird and Andrew Bennett, Canada's Ambassador for Religious Freedom, today issued the following statement:

"We are concerned by reports of Christians from the village of Maaloula, near Damascus, being forced to convert to Islam by Syrian rebels allegedly led by al Qaeda-linked fighters.

"Threats of violence used to forcibly convert individuals to another faith are completely unacceptable.

"Canada stands by the Syrian people, who deserve the freedom to practise their respective faiths without being persecuted.

"This freedom is essential so that all Syrians, regardless of religion, can contribute to Syria's future without fear of intimidation and violence."

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