

Geneva, 22 April 2016

Your Holiness Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem II,
Your Beatitude Patriarch John X,

Greetings from the World Council of Churches, and grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ during this blessed Lenten Season.

As the Orthodox Churches approach the Holy Week, looking with renewed hope and joy towards the feast of the feasts, the ecumenical family is saddened by the continued absence of the two beloved Metropolitans of Aleppo, Paul Yazigi and Youhanna Ibrahim for the third consecutive year. Together with your Churches and all the Christians in Syria and throughout the world, we continue to keep hope alive and pray for their safety and release.

In keeping our two brothers and beloved bishops in our hearts and prayers, we remember all the millions of innocent people in Syria who have lost their loved ones in this tragic and absurd war, all those who are tortured and unjustly imprisoned, and all those who have been forced to leave their homes and live in insecurity and vulnerability.

At a time when the ecumenical movement is engaged in a global “pilgrimage for justice and peace”, the WCC invites its member churches to accompany your people in the path of the Cross, leading to the glorious day of the Resurrection of our Lord. In this path we have committed ourselves, together with you, to develop ways of building bridges and working towards a just peace. I reiterate our conviction that “the Syrian people deserve another alternative to what they face today, and a just peace now. The international community has to take the common responsibility to secure it. We hope and pray that the suffering of the Syrian people will come to an end soon.”

May our Risen Lord give you and your Churches the strength, forbearance and wisdom to overcome these difficult and critical moments in the history of your country and region.

In Christ,

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit
General Secretary