



World Council of Churches

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H.H. Mor Ignatius Aphrem II
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Orthodox Saint Jacques Baradée
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Geneva, 16 February 2023

His Holiness Mor Ignatius Aphrem II
Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East
And Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church

Your Holiness,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of life and resurrection.

We have been closely following the dramatic developments on the ground following the devastating earthquake that struck Syria and Turkey. We are deeply saddened by the news that over 40,000 people have lost their lives, and tens of thousands more have been injured and left homeless. For many, this is the second or even third time they have been displaced in their lives. This has left millions of people in a state of shock and despair. Please accept our heartfelt sympathies and solidarity.

Your Holiness' prompt call for solidarity with those affected by the disaster, as well as the immediate action taken by the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East in providing aid and transforming church facilities into shelters for those who have lost their homes, are beacons of hope in these trying times. Your Holiness' resilience and unwavering faith in the face of adversity inspire and encourage us, and we are committed to doing our part in easing the suffering caused by this calamity. Our thoughts and prayers are with Your Holiness as you navigate through this challenging period, and we continue to stand in solidarity with Your Holiness, now as we have always done in the past. In this context, ACT Alliance has issued an urgent appeal that addresses many immediate needs and the WCC member churches are responding massively to this appeal. As a fellowship of churches, we are "to express the common concern of the churches in the service of human need, the breaking down of barriers between people and the promotion of one human family in justice and peace." (WCC Constitution).

We recognize the profound impact of this disaster, especially as Your Holiness continues to grapple with the ongoing challenges of conflict, displacement, and economic hardship. We stand with Your Holiness in prayer and support, as Your Holiness works to recover and rebuild in the wake of this tragedy. We are confident that Your Holiness' Church's diaconal actions will strengthen the historical and human ties between Christians and Muslims in Syria, as well as in the entire region. We learn from Your Holiness' courage and steadfastness when Your Holiness remains rooted in faith and promotes Christian ethical values in such critical moments.

We pray our Lord Jesus Christ to give Your Holiness all the strength and comfort Your Holiness needs to support the suffering and vulnerable people, and we are fully confident that you will emerge from this challenge stronger than ever before. Be assured that the entire ecumenical family holds Your Holiness constantly in prayer. This is an imperative of costly solidarity within the one body of Christ.

Yours in our common Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jerry Pillay". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jerry" being more prominent than the last name "Pillay".

Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay
General Secretary
World Council of Churches