



**THE ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE HEADS  
OF THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES  
IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

St. Mark Cathedral, Abbassia  
Cairo, Egypt  
March 19-20, 2015

**COMMON DECLARATION**

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

We, Pope Twadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, Patriarch Mar Ignatius Ephrem II, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, and Catholicos Aram I, Catholicos of the Armenians of the Great House of Cilicia, give thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ for granting us the opportunity to pray and to reflect together on issues and challenges of common concern, at St. Mark Cathedral, in Abbassia, Cairo-Egypt. This is the eleventh time that we officially meet as Heads of churches within the framework of the fellowship which was created in 1997.

We remember in prayer the passing away of the patriarchs of blessed memory His Holiness Pope Shenouda III and His Holiness Patriarch Mar Ignatius Zakka I, who together with His Holiness Aram I, may God grant him long life, have initiated this fellowship and its Standing Committee.

Congratulations were presented to His Holiness Pope Twadros II and His Holiness Patriarch Mar Ignatius Aphram II for their patriarchal enthronement.

In fact, the love of God, commitment to moral values, attachment to the homeland and living together with others with equal responsibilities and rights are basic Christian principles which should guide the life of our faithful. Christians are integral and inseparable part of the Middle East. Hence, preservation of their faith, culture, traditions, language and holy places is highly important. We are deeply concerned about the Christian presence in the Middle East, in the light of the latest tragic developments in the region. Hundreds of thousands of Christians were uprooted from their homeland, particularly from Musul, Nineveh Valley, Saddam and other places in Iraq and Syria; many faced violence, persecution and death because of their faith; churches, monasteries, schools, community centers and houses were destroyed; the international community was shocked on the martyrdom of the twenty-one innocent Christian Copts who were decapitated on Libyan coast last February. We pray to Almighty God to strengthen the faith of our people and rest the souls of our martyrs in peace. We offer condolences to the families of our martyrs and to the churches.

We express our deep concern about the kidnapping of Metropolitans Yuhanna Ibrahim and Boulos Yazigi, praying for their immediate release and asking the churches and the international community to exert their efforts in this respect.

We congratulate the Coptic Orthodox Church for the canonization of Pope Kyrillos VI (116) as saint by the Holy Synod in June 2013.

With great joy we were informed that during the patriarchal visit of His Holiness Mar Ignatius Aphram II to India, a joint committee was formed to restore peace and reconciliation in the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church.

We were also informed with particular joy that a round table was composed by the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Holy Synod of the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahido Church which will meet in Cairo, to seek a solution regarding the house arrest of His Holiness Abune Antonios I, the third patriarch of the Eritrean Church.

We welcome and congratulate the Armenian Orthodox Church for holding joined Bishops' meetings of the two catholicosates.

We encourage the Subcommittees (Seminaries Committee, Publications Committee and Youth Committee) which were appointed by the Standing Committee, to continue with renewed efforts their activities.

In our endeavor for the unity of the church, our Churches are engaged in a number of bilateral theological dialogues:

- a) *Dialogue with the Catholic Church.* The International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, held its twelfth meeting in Rome 24-31 January 2015. The Commission finalized its paper on “*The Exercise of Communion in the Life of the Early Church and Its Implications for our Search for Communion Today*”, and submitted it to the authorities of their churches for consideration and action.
- b) *Dialogue with the Orthodox Church.* Invited by the two co-chairmen of the Joint Commission for the Official Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, and with the gracious hospitality of the Ecumenical Patriarch His Holiness Bartholomew, a working group of official delegates met in Athens, Greece, 24-25 November 2014, to lay down a road map for the future work of the Joint Commission.

c) *Dialogue with the Anglican Communion of Churches*. The Anglican-Oriental Orthodox International Commission held its third meeting from 13-17 October 2014, at St. Mark's Center, Cairo, Egypt. The Commission continued its discussion on Christology and Pneumatology.

We welcome the proposal for a unified and fixed Easter date and invite all churches to give serious consideration to this matter.

We were informed about the discussions and decisions of the last meeting of the Executive Committee of the Middle East Council of Churches in Jordan, 22-23 January, 2015. We fully support the mission of this Council in our region.

We encourage the *Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches* to continue with its new structure the search for the visible unity of the churches and its reflection on moral discernment.

We were informed about the next meeting of the *Permanent Committee for the Collaboration between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Orthodox Church with the United Bible Societies*, in Constantinople from 14-17 April, 2015, and we affirm the importance of this collaboration in our region.

The *Pro-Oriente Organization* has celebrated its golden jubilee on November 6, 2014, where His Holiness Twadros II was present and met the Ecumenical Patriarch His Holiness Bartholomew. We are committed to continue our collaboration with Pro-Oriente.

We invite the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Orthodox Church to a meeting in Alexandria in 2017, to discuss issues and concerns facing our churches.

We also invite the heads of the Churches in the Middle East in 2016, to discuss the vital importance of the Christian presence and witness in the region.

We acknowledge that the year 2015 is the centenary of the Armenian and the Syrian Genocide. His Holiness Karekin II and His Holiness Aram I will preside over the canonization ceremony of the one and a half million martyrs of the Armenian Genocide on 23 April 2015, in Holy Etchmiyadzin, Armenia. **The martyrs of faith in Christ are indeed the martyrs of the universal church.** The heads of Oriental Orthodox Churches and representatives of churches will participate in this celebration.

We welcome the creation of the Egyptian Council of Churches in 2013.

We congratulate Egypt and her president His Excellency Abd el Fattah Sissy for the great success of the Economical Summit and we pray for the prosperity and peace Egypt.

As we conclude our Eleventh Meeting, we would like to express our warm thanks to His Holiness Pope Twadros II for his warm hospitality.

**Twadros II**  
Pope of Alexandria and  
Patriarch of the See  
of St. Mark

**Mar Ignatius Ephrem II**  
Patriarch of Antioch  
and all the East

**Aram I**  
Catholicos  
of the Great House  
of Cilicia