

# Middle East Christian NGOs

Middle East  
Christian NGOs:  
"We will meet  
outside the  
influence of  
suppression and  
Terrorism

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An unnamed official of the "Emergency Middle East Christian Leadership Conference" to be held in a country member of the European Union said "some have asked us why are we holding an emergency meeting in Europe and not in the Middle East, as other Middle East Christian related meetings have chosen? Our answer is that the rapidly exploding situation in several countries where Christians are being killed, wounded, kidnapped and driven out of their homes, compels us to be seriously addressing the matter with the international community. Local Governments have failed or have been failed in stopping violence and suppression, thus we need to engage international institutions, and European institutions are the closest ones we are reaching out to." The source added that "we are holding this conference on purpose on European ground, to underline the lack of security and freedom for the cause of Middle East Christians. We hold meetings constantly locally in our national countries, and we do it despite the dangers, but we want our international outreach to be outside the pressures of regimes and the threat of terror. Our own constituencies, the majority of our communities wants us to express their concerns to the world." On his part, Sheikh Sami Khoury, President of the World Maronite Union (WMU) said "we have announced months ago that such a conference will take place and we have been successful to come together as Middle East Christian NGOs despite all difficulties, and we will consulting each other on the best ways to help our communities in the region. We've enlisted the support of many in the Diaspora and we've sent several delegations to meet with civil society leaders in Lebanon over the past year. We have been asked to unite efforts with Christian communities across the region. This new effort will be unique, for it will aim at partnering with the international community, regardless of political interests in our mother countries."

Magdi Khalil, spokesperson of the Coptic Solidarity International said "we have already achieved many unified projects in the past few years, including conferences at the US Congress and with international NGOs. We're are moving now to insure a solid representation for these communities worldwide to help our communities in our homeland. We are confident that not only most Copts but most Egyptians are behind us as we struggle to insure the defense of democracy in our homeland against the menace of Jihadi terrorism."

On his part Joe Kassab, the coordinator of the Chaldean delegation to the Leadership conference said: "The fall of Saddam Régime has fueled far more persecution of minority Christians in Iraq such as the Chaldeans, Assyrians, Syriacs, and Armenians. In Iraq, religion has been politicized and the Islamist radicals along with the uncontrolled vicious sectarian militias directed their hatred and anger against Christians and other minorities causing thousands to flee their ancestral land leading to the Christian population to severely dwindle from 1.4 Million before 2003 war to less than 500,000. In addition, thousands of Christians are kidnapped and brutally murdered including an Archbishop and several priests while the United States seems to barely notice bits of this humanitarian tragedy leaving the plight of this faithful Biblical community up in the air. We all know by now that the desired freedom for Christians in Iraq is not realized and that its future is uncertain and bleak. Christians have been fleeing to safe Kurdistan and outside Iraq seeking protection and/or resettlement creating a significant mass exodus in the history of Iraq after the forced departure of the persecuted Iraqi Jewish community in the 1940's. Time has come for the siege against Christians in Iraq to be lifted, this can only happen with untiring advocacy and diligent empowerment by the Diaspora community and with the help of United States and the International Community. This certainly will avoid making them a collateral damage in Islam wars in the region. We together are united and ready to help."

Assyrian and Syriac leaders who are participating in the Conference are preparing opening statements to explain the dramatic suppression of their communities in Iraq and Syria. John Hajjar, an NGO Melkite representative said "we are hearing lately about meetings and conferences addressing the issues of Christians in the Middle East. So strange to see many groups rushing to represent the 25 million Christians in the Middle East, while they have been silent for decades. The reason for that rush is the fear by regimes in the region, from different axes to see the Middle East Christians moving towards the international community for support and recognition. The old ways are gone, with the rise of social media and internet. Now our young generations among Middle East Christians are asking for real action to defend these communities and keep them on their own soil. However they want to stay on their lands, not under the so-called protection of suppressive regimes. They want to be free from oppression and from Jihadi terror."

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