



**KIRCHE IN NOT**

WELTWEITES HILFSWERK PÄPSTLICHEN RECHTS

*...damit der Glaube lebt!*

gegründet 1947 von Pater Werenfried van Straaten als Ostpriesterhilfe



## KIRCHE IN NOT Deutschland

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### **Statement von Pater Ziad Hilal SJ, Homs, Syrien, auf der Kundgebung „Glaube braucht Bekenntnis – Verfolgte Christen brauchen Hilfe“ am 20. September 2015 in Augsburg**

I am a Jesuit father and priest in Syria. I came from Homs and I am thankful for the opportunity to address you all in Augsburg and Germany.

The situation in Syria is very bad. Many towns and houses are destroyed. Many people were killed or badly injured from the fighting which is ongoing since more than 4 years.

More than half of Syria is now in the hands of Islamic State and recent figures from UNICEF list 12.2 million of the country's inhabitants as 'in need'. There might be 2 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon; 1 million each in Turkey and in Jordan; and more elsewhere in Europe, the USA and Canada, with more leaving daily. The estimates change constantly. The Syrian people are tired and exhausted after these four years of conflicts. For this reason many lost their houses, their jobs, their relatives and friends, even their culture and civilization and their home country. The refugees hope to find a new country to live even far away. They try to protect their children and family. Your country, Germany has become one of the main goals.

The Islamic State has taken most of the north and east of Syria took recently Palmyra and Al Qaryatain. They intend to take over further cities in the west and south of Syria.

What hope is left for the Syrians still in the country?

The problem in Syria is not just one of Christians or Muslims, it is one for humanity. It is very important today to tell the international community that the best way to help Syria is to

achieve peace. Only this could stop the waves of refugees. It is not sufficient to provide humanitarian help for food, clothing, winterization and other such material help. Soon such need would be required for the entire population.

The Syrian civil society was built on the basis of cooperation between the different ethnical groups and religions. The Christian churches played and still play a very strong role and are still the backbone for the daily life to resist the logic of war and to survive the violence that threatens to overthrow the entire civilization and culture and to destroy the communities. The Christian associations are the visible differences in the country to bridge the differences and strains between the conflicting faiths. They are the local players as well as the international volunteers to serve everyone through interface dialogue and love.

The painting of the crisis in some parts of the media, then, as a religious conflict is not only inaccurate – ‘Believe me, a lot of Muslim people support the Christian people and the Christian people support the Muslim people’ – but it feeds the agenda of those, who wish to shirk any kind of responsibility for the welfare of the Syrian people by distancing themselves from their situation.

The ancient Christian community - descended from the first Christians - had a particular role in Syrian society, often acting as a peaceful bridge between the different Muslim groups. Through that experience, helping people in need, we believe that we are able to plant the seeds of future reconciliation, with young people in Syria is to grow up a generation for peace, not a generation of war. This moving mission statement speaks at the same time to the sad reality that the conflict in Syria has infused the mentality of a whole generation, and to the dedication of those who refuse to settle for anything other than peace.

The Christian church has proved its dedication and strength in serving the country. Its clergy continued to remain strong even when they got two bishops and four priests kidnapped and even four priests murdered. Here I want to highlight Father Frans van der Lugt, who became the most impressive model of martyrdom not only for the Christians. He will not be forgotten even by many Muslims worldwide.

Finally I want to thank Church in Need and all other associations and donors supporting us. We know very well that without your help we could not do what our hearts and souls urge us to do.

Augsburg, 20. September 2015

Fr. Ziad Hilal SJ