

## **JOINT STATEMENT BY THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF CYPRUS**

**24 NOVEMBER 2015**

We, the religious leaders of the five main faith communities of Cyprus, Greek Orthodox, Muslim, Armenian Orthodox, Maronite and Latin Catholic, who form the *Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process under the Auspices of the Embassy of Sweden*, committed and working all together for human rights and peace in Cyprus, express our united voice against all forms of attacks, terrorism and violence in our country, region and the world at large.

United in one voice we reiterate that as religious leaders we pray first and foremost for all victims everywhere, their families and friends and with all those who are mourning all over the world.

We are horrified to see the increased appalling violence against innocent civilians in our region and beyond, with victims including children, women and the elderly. Growing numbers of refugees from our region are risking their lives daily, facing hostilities, rejection and death. We are with them in deep compassion and prayer.

We categorically condemn all forms of violence against innocent civilians. No war, no act of terrorism, atrocities or violent attacks against innocent people can be justified in the name of God Almighty or any religion or humanity. War begets war. Violence begets violence. All people of good will must stand together to respect, support and care for one another. Violence in the name of God is violence against religion itself.

As religious leaders we have a responsibility not only to speak out and work united against all forms of violence but also understand and address diligently the root causes that lead to such conflicts, violence and wars and to always promote and protect peace.

Our sacred texts call us not only to combat injustice but also to uplift the poorest in our midst. Where inequality is entrenched, instability and conflict are far more likely to erupt. Inspired by our shared values we embrace the moral imperative to reach out to the most vulnerable among us, uphold human dignity and advocate for human rights.

The dialogue we have experienced together has strengthened our conviction

that there is no future without tolerance, mutual understanding, respect and peaceful co-existence.

With our different identities we have to be together as one human family, as people of every faith or none. We have a responsibility to preach, act and show that our shared respect for human life and dignity is stronger than evil acts of terror, and perversion of religion.

Together we reaffirm the need to all uphold democratic, intercultural and human rights values that have been attacked recently in Ankara, Sinai, Beirut, Paris, Yola and Bamako.

Let us recommit our care and hospitality to those fleeing violence, oppression and war.

Let us be compassionate and walk humbly with our God on the way of love, mercy, justice and peace.

***Signatories:***

**H.B Chrysostomos II, Archbishop of Nova Justiniana and All Cyprus.**

**H.E Dr Talip Atalay, Mufti of Cyprus**

**H.E. Nareg, Archbishop of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church of Cyprus**

**H.E. Yousef Soueif, Archbishop of the Maronite Church of Cyprus**

**Rev Father Jerzy Kraj, Latin Patriarchal Vicar and Representative of the Apostolic Nunciature in Cyprus**