



Final Statement of the MECC Executive Committee Meeting

16-17 January, 2017

The National Evangelical Church, Beirut - Lebanon

The Executive Committee of the MECC held its first meeting, hosted by the National Evangelical Church of Beirut, presided by the Presidents who represent the four ecclesial families that constitute the Council:

For the Eastern Orthodox family: His Holiness Patriarch Mor Ignatius Ephrem II, Patriarch of Antioch and All of the East, Head of the Syriac Orthodox Church in the world.

For the Orthodox family: His Beatitude Patriarch John X, Patriarch of Antioch and all of the East for the Greek Orthodox.

For the Evangelical family: Rev. Dr. Habib Badr, President of the National Evangelical Union in Lebanon.

The President of the Council for the Catholic family, His Beatitude Patriarch Mor Louis Raphael I Sako, Patriarch of Babel for the Chaldeans, was absent for previous commitments in Iraq.

The General Secretary of the MECC, Fr. Michel Jalakh, and the members of the Executive Committee were also present at the meeting.

Following the prayers and spiritual meditations, the participants went over the agenda, discussing the report of the General Secretary that includes a complete review of the work accomplished by the General Secretariat over the last period, in addition to the financial report of the Council, and a presentation of the situation of refugees and the displaced due to the harsh conditions in the Middle East, according to the reports of the Ecumenical Relief Service Program in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, the Inter-Church Network for Relief and Development, and the Department for Diakonia and Social Justice.

The participants also visited the President of the Lebanese Republic General Michel Aoun at the Baabda Palace, expressing their happiness and relief for his election as

President of the Lebanese Republic. Moreover, they commended his active and unifying role that serves as a guarantee for all the Lebanese and the Christians of the Middle East, showing appreciation for the valuable gift presented by His Excellency to Patriarch John X: an ancient copy of the Holy Gospel.

The participants also applauded the formation of the new Lebanese government, as they look forward to the return of regularity to the constitutional institutions and the various facilities of the State, laying the foundation for a new era of prosperity and rebuilding of Lebanon, long an example for co-existence and multiculturalism, to be crowned by the adoption of a new law for legislative elections that ensures the true and fair representation of all the components of the country, especially Christians.

The Executive Committee further decided:

- The priority of maintaining the Christian presence in the Middle East and what Christians are suffering from in certain countries including displacement, abduction, persecution, uprooting, and eradication. The participants demanded that Heads of States, political and spiritual decision-makers, Arabs and Muslims, work diligently to preserve the religious diversity that constitutes the uniqueness of our Middle East.
- The importance of strengthening the Departments and programs of the Council and facilitating its access to the various Churches and countries in the region, especially to the Christians in the Middle East. Therefore, the participants discussed the relations between the Churches in the Middle East and the Churches and Christian organizations in the rest of the world, especially those that share the same fears, feelings, and aspirations for the service of maintaining Christian presence in the Middle East.
- The Christian-Islamic dialogue was also discussed, for it represents an essential pillar in the relationship between the Council and its partners with whom it shares the same homelands and fate.
- Finding a peaceful solution to the crisis in Syria that guarantees the unity of the country and the secure and free co-existence between the different civilizational and religious components within a secular state.
- Providing the needed support for the return of the refugees, displaced, and uprooted to their lands in freedom and human dignity, especially the Christians of Moussol and the towns of the Nineveh plain in Iraq, who themselves are the owners of the land and its original inhabitants.
- Urging the states in the Middle East and the international community to give sufficient attention to the refugees in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan, in order to ensure a dignified standard of life for them and a safe return to their countries as fast as possible.

- Denouncing the terrorist actions that target civilians, churches, and houses of prayer in the Middle East, especially the terrorist attack upon the Church of Sts Peter and Paul near the Cathedral of St Mark in Cairo - Egypt, in addition to several terrorist attacks throughout the world.
- Confirming its support for the just cause of the Palestinian people and its right in founding its own state, in addition to the return of Palestinian refugees to their land according to UN resolutions.
- Putting an end to the abnormal situation in the island of Cyprus, unifying its lands, and protecting the rights of all its citizens.
- Appealing to the international authorities and all people of good will to intensify their efforts for the release of all those who are kidnapped, especially the bishops of Aleppo Boulos Al-Yaziji and Youhanna Ibrahim, as well as all the priests and civilians, as we pray to God for their safe return as soon as possible.

At the end of the meeting, the participants renewed their hope in the Lord Jesus who promised his Church that He shall remain in its midst and keep its sons and daughters as the apple of His eye, despite all the challenges and hardships it is facing, so that it may continue witnessing to the God of love and peace in the land of fathers and ancestors, for He is the one who says: "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)