



CONFÉRENCE DES ÉVÊQUES CATHOLIQUES DU CANADA
CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

5 November 2010

The Honorable Mr. Lawrence Cannon
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Fax: 613-992-6802

Dear Minister:

As Chairman of the Human Rights Committee of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, I wish to express my profound concern about the violent attack on Iraqi Christians carried out on October 31, 2010, in a Syriac Catholic church in Bagdad.

This act, described as "absurd violence" by Pope Benedict XVI, follows previous attacks already perpetrated against Iraqi Christians since the beginning of the conflict there in March 2003. Syriac Catholic Patriarch Joseph III Younan has decried this attack, as well as the indifference of the international community to the situation faced by Christians in Iraq. Of 800,000 Christians living there before the war, the majority of them Chaldean Catholics, only about 550,000 remain. They are regularly subjected to death threats, murder and kidnappings by extremist groups seeking to force them into exile.

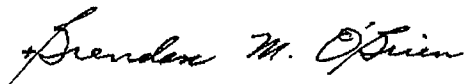
The Christian community in Iraq is one of the oldest in the Middle East, and its history shows it has contributed enormously to Iraq's development, living in harmony with Muslims.

At the conclusion of their Synod on the Middle East, Bishops called on their respective governments to "redouble ... efforts to establish a just and lasting peace throughout the region." We wish to reiterate this call in asking you to collaborate actively with national

and international institutions, particularly the Government of Iraq, in efforts to ensure that Christian minorities can live their faith in peace and full security.

Thank you for the consideration that you will give to our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brendan M. O'Brien".

Most Reverend Brendan M. O'Brien
Archbishop of Kingston
Chairman of the Human Rights Committee
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

CC: His Excellency Mr. Howar Ziad, Iraq Ambassador to Canada