



May 30, 2012

His Excellency Osamah Al Sanosi Ahmad
Ambassador of Saudi Arabia
201 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, ON
K1N 1K6

Your Excellency,

In a statement on March 12, 2012, Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah, reputedly one of the most influential voices in the Islamic world, said that “only one religion”, Islam, “should exist in the Arabian Peninsula”, and thus “it is necessary to destroy all churches in the region”. Although this was widely circulated by news agencies more than two months ago, there have been no reports yet indicating that Saudi Arabian authorities have since corrected or denounced this call to religious violence.

Article 18 of the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance”.

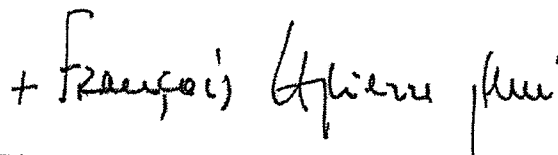
We ask your government to apply the principle stated in the Riyadh Declaration of 2003: “Compulsion in religion is forbidden according to the Divine law, international traditions and conventions which should not be practiced under any circumstances” (#8). Such tolerance is not evident in the statement made by Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah.

King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud is respected for promoting dialogue among the world’s leading faiths, his role in the convening of the World Conference on Dialogue in Madrid, Spain, and for having encouraged a United Nations

conference on dialogue in 2008. We strongly urge you to express to His Royal Highness our concerns about the statement by Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah, particularly in view of the urgent need for religious harmony and tolerance in the Middle East.

May God's peace bless all people of good will.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "François Lapierre". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

The Most Reverend François Lapierre, P.M.É
Bishop of Saint-Hyacinthe
Chairman of the Human Rights Committee
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

c.c.: The Honourable John Baird
Minister of Foreign Affairs