

News Release

Over 800,000 people from 143 countries sign petition calling for a better future for Christians and other minorities in the Middle East

December 12, 2017 - MP David Anderson is championing the Open Doors Hope for the Middle East petition signed by over 800,000 people from 143 countries, asking the Canada government and the United Nations to ensure that Christians and other minorities in the Middle East enjoy the right to equal citizenship, dignified living conditions and a prominent role in reconciling and rebuilding their society.

Over 7,400 people from Canada have signed the petition, along with over 200,000 people from the Middle East itself. The petition was presented by Mr. Anderson to the House of Commons on December 11, 2017.

David Anderson, MP Cypress Hills-Grasslands and Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Human Rights and Religious Freedom commented, "The situation in Iraq and Syria demands our attention. Millions of Christians and other religious minorities are threatened. They have been displaced and rendered refugees. Their plight cannot be ignored. We in Canada must stand with them. May the Church in the Middle East be strengthened, and may there be a better future for people of all faiths in the Middle East."

The petition is part of the *Hope for the Middle East* campaign, launched by Open Doors in partnership with Middle East Concern. As part of this, the petition calls upon governments around the world and the United Nations to:

- Ensure that the current and future legal frameworks in Syria and Iraq fully promote and protect the equal and inalienable rights of all their citizens, irrespective of race or religion
- To ensure the dignified and continued improvement of living conditions for all citizens
- To identify and equip religious leaders and faith-based organisations to play a constructive role in reconciling and rebuilding both Syrian and Iraqi societies.

Gary Stagg, Executive Director of Open Doors Canada said, "With 80% of Christians having left Iraq and 85% of Christian being forced out of Aleppo in Syria, it is unthinkable that the church is diminishing so radically from the Middle East – the birthplace of Christianity. The King of Jordan has said that Christians are the glue that hold the Middle East together. Extremists have landed a devastating blow to the church in Iraq and Syria over the past few years. Our desire is to see the church of Christ thriving and sharing the light of Christ in the region."

Father Daniel (27), an Iraqi priest who fled from Islamist extremists, and is representing many displaced Iraqi Christians said, "Since I was born all I have known is war, war, war. I hope that today's children will have a life without any wars and without any weapons. They need peace. I want the children in my Sunday school to have a better future and to be properly and equally included in their society."

The petition was also presented to the United Nations in New York on Monday, 11 December by Noeh, a 12-year-old Iraqi boy who was forced to flee when IS invaded his village. Nearly four years later, IS has been driven out and his family have returned to rebuild their burnt-out house. May harmony and peace be restored to these lands once again.

[Iraq is number 7](#) and [Syria is number 6](#) on the Open Doors World Watch List – a ranking of the 50 countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution.

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For more information or to arrange an interview with Gary Stagg, contact Open Doors Canada at:

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The petition is presented to MP David Anderson in Centre Block on Parliament Hill by Gary Stagg Executive Director, Open Doors Canada. Shortly after this it was presented by Mr. Anderson to the House of Commons, Government of Canada