



*Open Letter to the President of the United States  
from the Rt. Rev'd Julian M. Dobbs, Bishop  
The Missionary Diocese of CANA East*

August 28, 2013

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As your administration determines a response to the serious and deteriorating situation in Syria, I urge you to consider the consequences for the Christian minorities across the country of any military action initiated by the United States and her allies.

Christians make up about 10% of Syria's population, yet they are particularly vulnerable and have become targets of religious cleansing by forces who are determined to establish sharia law. Islamist militant groups, including Al Qaeda, have become increasingly prominent and now control some parts of the country, endangering the Christian residents in those areas.

Already rebel forces have destroyed numerous churches, and many thousands of Christians and other minorities are displaced within Syria or have fled their homeland altogether and are now living in very difficult circumstances in refugee camps in neighboring countries.

In one of the latest incidents, at least 15 Christians were killed in a murderous attack near Ein al-Ajouz in Wadi al Nasara ("Valley of the Christians") in the early hours of Saturday August 17, 2013. Armed militants first killed soldiers at a checkpoint before going on a shooting rampage, targeting innocent Christian civilians.

Military action that results in the demise of President Assad's forces would almost certainly allow a strengthened Al Qaeda presence in Syria that would result in significant and increased persecution of Syrian Christians. This is the situation in southern Libya, where the void created by the demise of the Libyan military has emboldened Al Qaeda's operation in the region.

One of the grave consequences of military action initiated by the United States in Iraq was the destruction of the Iraqi Christian community. Over 3.5 million Iraqis were forced from their homes after the conflict. Christians, who made up only 3-4% of the population of Iraq, account for nearly a quarter of the refugee population.

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What guarantees of security and religious freedom can you and your administration give to the already suffering Christian community in Syria if a military intervention is initiated by the United States? And how can you be certain that the recent history of Libya and Iraq will not repeat itself once again and cause indefensible and unpardonable suffering to Syria's vulnerable Christians and other minorities?

The United States and her allies may use the *Responsibility to Protect* rationale to justify military action in Syria. But they should not use this selectively, and ignore the unintended consequences of their actions on the Christian minority which, unlike other minorities in Syria, is largely defenseless. Furthermore the Christians will also be at greater risk than other minorities in the aftermath of a US strike on their country; this is because Christian minorities are perceived as allies of the West due to their Christian faith and are therefore the traditional scapegoats on which Muslim extremists vent their wrath against the West.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Julian M. Dobbs." The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross symbol at the beginning.

The Rt. Rev'd Julian M. Dobbs, Bishop  
The Missionary Diocese of CANA East