



## PARLAMENT DE CATALUNYA

### **Declaration of the Parliament of Catalonia of adherence to international efforts to denounce the persecution of cultural and religious minorities in Iraq and Syria**

In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948, the states pledged to respect and enforce the set of human, civil, economic, political, social and cultural rights, which include the right of all people to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

According to this declaration, everyone has the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

The Parliament of Catalonia has always advocated respect for and fulfillment of human rights and expressed opposition to the persecution of people for any reason, as stated in the Institutional Declaration on the Commemoration of the 52nd Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of 29 November 2000, and the Declaration of the Parliament of Catalonia on the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of 1 December 2008, among others, because no cause warrants the death of innocent people.

Furthermore, for many years the people of Catalonia have shown a clear commitment to peace and peaceful conflict resolution in order to contribute decisively to building a fairer world order.

However, studies by independent international organizations agree that social hostilities related to religion, government restrictions on religious matters and the abuse of religious minorities are growing every year.

Recently, this situation has worsened in some countries of the Middle East. The various conflicts affect especially the religious, ethnic and cultural minorities that are suffering persecution, exodus, forced exile, and even genocide. Christian churches occupy a prominent place among the various faiths that suffer harassment, restrictions or persecution.

For example, in the early 20th century Christians made up 26% of the total population of those countries, but they currently make up only 10%, and the Christian minorities are increasingly persecuted for professing their faith. This situation is also experienced by Shias in areas where Sunnis form the majority, by Yazidis and by Assyro-Chaldeans.

Unfortunately, the systematic killings of ethnic groups and peoples also have much to do with belief and religion. This is why some of the most dramatic episodes that have taken place in recent months in Iraq and Syria have been described by international historians and analysts as crimes against civilization and against humanity.



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The ethnic cleansing that the organization Islamic State has been carrying out recently against the Kurdish Yazidi minority and the Christians in Iraq and the siege of the city of Kobane in northern Syria have been especially devastating.

In view of this persecution, many people have denounced the situation and called for peace, coexistence and reconciliation. Several heads of state and of religious groups and many other personalities from other fields have mentioned this question repeatedly and have taken personal action in this regard.

Therefore,

The Parliament of Catalonia publicly expresses its support for the initiatives taken by international institutions to condemn and stop the killings and persecution based on religious or ethnic motives that are suffered by various minorities, especially the Christian and Yazidi minorities in the Middle East.

The Parliament of Catalonia strongly believes that different cultures and faiths have in common the search for peace, peaceful coexistence and universal brotherhood, which should be a cohesive factor rather than one of confrontation, and encourages international institutions and also the people of Catalonia to continue raising their voice and to join efforts to promote peace and respect for freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

The Parliament of Catalonia calls on the international community to urgently take responsible actions to stop new cases of genocide and massive persecution of ethnic and religious minorities in the Middle East. Specifically, it asks the international community to take urgent action to stop the genocide that the organization Islamic State is committing against the Kurdish and Assyro-Chaldean minority in the Kurdish region of Kobani, in northern Syria, and against Christians in Iraq and Syria.

Palace of Parliament, 2 October 2014