PRESS RELEASE

NEW BOMB ATTACK KILLS THREE ARAMEAN CHRISTIANS IN QAMISHLI, NORTHEAST SYRIA

On Sunday evening, 24 January 2016, the formerly predominantly Aramean Christian city of Qamishli in northeast Syria has been attacked for the third time in less than a month time. Café Star in the largely Christian quarter of the city was bombed, resulting in the death of at least three Aramean young men and about 10 persons injured.

Local sources report that unidentified persons placed explosives on a bicycle that was parked in front of the Aramean-owned Café Star in al-Wusta, the mainly Christian district of Qamishli, which exploded early in the evening. At least three Arameans (Bassam Jacob, Fawzi Gabro and Moris Khajo) were killed in the attack, leaving about ten persons injured who are now being treated in the local Salaam Hospital.

This bomb attack comes right after two other attacks on the Aramean Christians in the city. On 30 December 2015, still unknown terrorists killed 13 Christians (9 Arameans, 4 Armenians) in a series of three bomb attacks. On 11 January 2015, the Aramean Gaby Henry Daoud was brutally shot in the back of his head by Kurdish YPG-fighters, while he was guarding the checkpoint in al-Wusta that was set up by the Aramean self-defense unit called Sootoro after the earlier attacks.

Nobody has claimed responsibility for this latest bomb attack yet. To understand the bigger picture of the last mentioned attack, and possibly of the first and third attacks, see the WCA’s earlier report: http://wca-ngo.org/our-work/238-files/syria-file/547-ongoing-kurdish-terror-attacks-against-aramean-christians-in-syria.

Johny Messo, the President of the World Council of Arameans (Syriacs) (“WCA”), strongly condemns these cowardly attacks and expresses his deep concerns about the ongoing situation: “It is time for the international community to protect the final remaining Arameans in their homeland. Now is the time to hear the cries for help from a disappearing civilization and people in Syria. We cannot grasp how armed groups, foreign countries and foreign non-state actors are all invited by the United Nations and the states who organize the Geneva peace talks next week in order to discuss a political solution, while Syria’s indigenous Aramean people are again denied a seat at the table.”

In antiquity, Syria (the Greek and Roman term for the originally Semitic name Aram) was the home of Aramean kingdoms well-known from the Bible, of the Aramaic language and literature, of the
formation of early Eastern Christianity, and more. The city of Qamishli itself, which still has an Aramean mayor, was founded in 1926 by Aramean Christians when they fled newly-born Turkey.

Until the conflicted erupted in 2011, the Christians constituted 10% (2.3 million) of Syria’s national population. Hundreds of thousands of Arameans have already fled their war-torn homeland. The Arameans have retained their 3,000-year old Aramaic mother tongue, which is widely known as the language of Jesus, and they are indigenous to Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Lebanon. However, in none of these countries they are officially recognized as a distinct people where they continue to struggle for recognition and survival. Hence your voice and support are much needed.

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*The WCA is the free and acknowledged voice of the Aramean (Syriac) people. It does not receive any (government) funding for its variety of work and activities. Therefore, we ask you to strengthen the WCA by becoming a WCA Member via www.SupportWCA.com.*