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## WORLDWIDE RECOGNITION OF GENOCIDE NECESSARY

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INTERVIEW WITH SOPHIA KUBLY, Director of EU Advocacy with ADF INTERNATIONAL on the PLIGHT OF CHRISTIANS IN SYRIA AND IRAQ

*In the first week of February, The European Parliament will vote on a resolution on the situation of Christians in Syria and Iraq who are being abducted, tortured, raped and killed by members of the so-called 'Islamic state'. What role could and should the EU play in this inhumane tragedy?*

The European Union needs to call the atrocities against Christians and other minorities in Syria and Iraq by its name: genocide. There is an increasing number of declarations, resolutions, reports and public statements by international institutions and prominent politicians which use the term 'genocide' when speaking about this systematic persecution in the Middle East. However, the European Parliament has, as of yet, only gone as far as saying that it "could be called genocide". Now is the time for Europe to act. There is a growing consensus on this across the political spectrum. Hillary Clinton, for example, said on 29<sup>th</sup> of December 2015: 'What is happening is genocide, deliberately aimed at destroying not only the lives but wiping out the existence of Christians and other religious minorities in the Middle East in territory controlled by ISIS.'

The EU should recognize this for what it is by passing an unequivocal resolution condemning the systematic persecution in the Middle East as genocide.

*Is it right to speak of a genocide when addressing the situation of Christians in the Middle East? What is the legal definition?*

The internationally recognized legal term of genocide is narrowly defined in international law and has been described as the 'crime of all crimes'. The UN Genocide Convention of 1948 provides that acts need to be committed with "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group" and it needs to involve intentional killing of members of this group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to these members or deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.

The clear trail of destruction being wrought by ISIS, combined with their public statements leaves no doubt that the intentional killing is carried out with a genocidal aim.

*What difference does it make whether or not European Members of Parliament call it a genocide? How could the outcome of this discussion affect the lives of the Christians in Iraq and Syria?*

First of all, these are fellow human beings and they urgently need this recognition in the strongest terms as a first step towards addressing the situation. Genocide is an internationally recognized legal term and such decisive action from the European Parliament would provide a basis to call for further steps, such as a resolution at the UN Security Council and a referral to the International Criminal Court.

*What is the position of ADF International on this matter and why?*

ADF International is calling on the European Parliament to recognize this human tragedy as genocide. To fail to do so would mean stopping short of doing everything we can to address a situation that has caused severe physical and mental suffering to millions. The numbers of Christians in Syria and Iraq have dropped from 1.25 million to 500.000 (Syria) and from 1.4 million to under 275.000 (Iraq) in just a few years. Since its earliest days,



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Christianity has been present in this region. Today, in some of its cities there may well be not one Christian left. ADF International is in full support of recognizing this situation as genocide and encourages the European Union, but also the wider International Community, to make all possible efforts to ease the suffering by speaking out loudly

*What are the next steps after a resolution is issued?*

If the European Parliament qualifies the situation in Syria and Iraq as genocide, this would provide a strong foundation for a new attempt to pass a resolution at the UN Security Council, which has the power to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court. Although the path is difficult, the aim must be to achieve a world-wide condemnation of the atrocities of ISIS at the ICC, just as happened with Srebrenica and Rwanda, so Christians in the Middle East can live free from the fear of persecution and death.