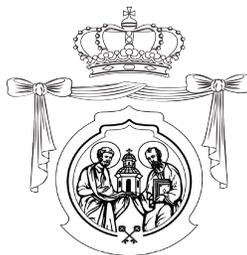


His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 11, 2015

Englewood, New Jersey

**A Call to Reject all Hateful Speech and Actions Against our Muslim Friends
and Neighbors**

As Orthodox Christians, we take to heart the commandments of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, especially the commandment that He has told us is the greatest, that is *“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”* (Matthew 22:39).

We have watched with dismay as several public figures have played on the fear which they assume has swept over this country. Specifically, a recent news release from the Trump campaign has called for “a total and complete shutdown of all Muslims entering the United States”. We reject in the strongest possible terms both this specific call, and all speech and actions which would encourage hate and persecution against any group of people. We call on all leaders, in the political arena and in the faith community to also reject this call, and to remember that such an action would bring dishonor to all of the brave men and women of all backgrounds who have given their lives to uphold the core values of freedom and dignity which we enjoy.

We have seen an alarming rise in recent days in the number of hateful and violent actions which have been perpetrated against Muslims, or those who are presumed to be Muslims. There is no doubt that such hateful rhetoric encourages those who may be inclined to violence to act out this violence. We condemn in the strongest possible terms any act of violence against any human being, and we are reminded that all human beings bear the image of God, and are to be respected as children of God. We also unconditionally condemn all acts of terror, such as the recent one in San Bernardino, California which brought pain to so many people.

The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America proclaims that all people must be treated with the respect and the dignity that is due to human beings. To single out people of an entire religion because of the senseless and horrific actions of terrorists actually assists the terrorists by reinforcing the

“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)

divisions and fear which they wish to spread. We urge the civil authorities of the United States to use every effort to root out any threat of terror by legal and noble means.

As we journey through this Advent Season and prepare ourselves for the Lord to be born in a lowly cave in order to save us, we send up our prayers for all of the people who are suffering daily around the world, especially in the Middle East. We stand in solidarity with our friends and neighbors, and we will be of assistance to them in any way that we can. We ask our gracious and loving Lord to bring an abiding and lasting peace to the world, a peace that can only come from Him.

“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)

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