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Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace

Montreal, October 4, 2016

The Honourable Stéphane Dion  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
80 Wellington St.  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Minister Dion,

Now in its sixth year, the war in Syria has created unprecedented suffering. Development and Peace – Caritas Canada receives daily reports from our partner organizations working in the region of atrocities and unspeakable war crimes. With over 1 million people under siege, Syrians are at the breaking point. The recent cessation of hostilities offered hope but many violations of this agreement, including the shocking attack on a UN aid convoy near Aleppo on September 19, 2016, has led to an unprecedented escalation of violence in the battered city and worsening food and medical shortages.

Development and Peace is committed to continuing to provide humanitarian assistance and support peacebuilding activities in Syria and the surrounding region. We work in partnership with your government, as well as with our Canadian donors, who have given over \$3M for our Syrian response, with the goal of making peace possible in Syria.

We welcome your recent announcements at the United Nations in New York on Canada's new commitments to humanitarian and peacekeeping efforts. We also strongly support your urgent call for protection of civilians and immediate access to humanitarian aid for Syrians in need. In order to realize these demands, accountability is needed for all parties who violate negotiated agreements such as cessations of hostilities or ceasefires, and who violate international humanitarian law.

Our nation-wide movement of Canadians committed to justice, human dignity, and peace took action today as part of our National Day of Action and Prayer for Peace in Syria. This day was held as part of a larger national advocacy campaign on Syria which we launched in February 2016, and is part of a worldwide Caritas Internationalis campaign called "Syria: Peace is Possible".

Since the campaign began, and particularly on this Day of Action, Canadians are sending three recommendations to Prime Minister Trudeau calling on the government to do everything possible to:

1. contribute to a lasting peace in Syria, in collaboration with Syrian civil society;
2. protect civilians and ensure access to humanitarian aid; and
3. promote social cohesion and self-sufficiency among Syrian refugees and host populations in neighbouring countries.

Development and Peace shares your belief in the essential role that civil society, and especially women, play in peace processes, as indicated in our first recommendation. For this reason, we are sharing with you a policy position we have just published called *“A Peace Process for and with Syrians: How Canada can ensure a lasting peace in Syria”*. This publication shows how Canada can take a leading role in including civil society in peace processes. We urge your government to consider its recommendations and start building peace in Syria from the inside.

We appreciate your government’s commitment to consultation and participation, and it is in this spirit that our organization, with the support of our members across Canada, share these recommendations for how Canada can contribute to finding solutions to the conflict and end the suffering of millions of Syrians.

Yours sincerely,



Josianne Gauthier  
In-Canada Programs Director