

**Security Council**

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**Letter dated 12 March 2015 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to inform you that on Friday, 27 March 2015, at 10 a.m., the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations plans to hold in the Security Council, under the French presidency, an open debate on the victims of attacks and abuses on ethnic or religious grounds in the Middle East. The related concept note is provided in the annex to this letter.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Alexis **Lamek**  
Deputy Permanent Representative  
Chargé d'affaires a.i.



**Annex to the letter dated 12 March 2015 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

[Original: English and French]

**Concept note for the Security Council open debate on the victims of attacks and abuses on ethnic or religious grounds in the Middle East, 27 March 2015**

**1. Context**

Following the recent tragic events in which Christians in the Middle East were targeted (the abduction of Christians by Daesh in the Syrian Arab Republic, the destruction of Christian sites, the killing of 21 Egyptian Copts by a terrorist group in Libya), it is important for the Security Council and the entire international community to mobilize against the systematic and widespread persecution by Daesh of ethnic or religious groups and other minorities in an attempt to methodically eradicate the diversity of the social fabric of societies in the Middle East.

In recent months, intolerance, violent extremism and religious or ethnic persecution have gained ground in the Middle East; grave and widespread violations of human rights and international humanitarian law are being committed in the region. Christians, Yezidi, Kurds, Turkmen, Shabak and, in some countries, Sunnis and Shias and others belonging to communities or minorities have been abused by Daesh, affiliated groups or other terrorist organizations, and see their future in the region threatened. That persecution includes targeted killings, forced conversions, abductions, slavery, torture, sexual and physical violence, and the besieging of entire communities on the basis of ethnic, religious or sectarian affiliation. Hundreds of thousands of civilians belonging to these communities have been forced to flee. As part of this systematic and widespread strategy of religious and ethnic persecution, and in an attempt to erase any trace of cultural diversity, Daesh has intentionally destroyed Sunni and Shia shrines, Christian monasteries and churches, and other places of cultural or religious significance.

In this context, it is crucial that the Security Council and the international community fully mobilize to address the widespread and systematic persecution by Daesh of individuals belonging to ethnic and religious groups and other minorities and show their joint commitment to an inclusive Middle East rich in diversity and history in its various cultures and religions. France therefore wishes to hold, during its presidency, a ministerial meeting of the Security Council on 27 March on the question of minorities in the Middle East being persecuted on ethnic or religious grounds.

This high-level meeting will give us an opportunity to condemn the widespread and systematic persecution of members of these ethnic or religious groups, to address the impunity of the perpetrators and to reaffirm the undeniable right of these individuals to live in their own country in peace, freedom, equality and dignity. It will also allow us to call on all Member States to respect and protect fundamental rights and freedoms, including the freedom of religion or belief, of all individuals, regardless of their national origin, ethnicity or religion; to combat all forms of racism and discrimination; and to promote the development of more

inclusive societies. Building on the outcome of the Washington Summit of 19 February, measures to combat terrorism and violent extremism while respecting human rights and international humanitarian law could also be considered. Finally, humanitarian assistance for countries facing the challenge of managing hundreds of thousands of displaced persons is key to ensuring the preservation of inclusive societies, and could also be addressed at the meeting.

## **2. Format**

The meeting will be held on 27 March at 10 a.m. in the Security Council Chamber.

Its purpose is to highlight the situation of persecuted minorities in the Middle East and to mobilize the international community to find ways to protect the diversity of Middle Eastern societies, with a view to identifying measures to combat impunity and to provide security and humanitarian assistance.

The meeting will be chaired by Mr. Laurent Fabius, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development of France, and will be held at ministerial level.

The meeting will be public and open to all Member States.

The Secretary-General (to be confirmed) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al-Hussein (to be confirmed) will brief the Security Council. Other eminent individuals, such as religious leaders and members of civil society engaged in defending human rights, combatting discrimination, or promoting tolerance and inter-faith dialogue, will also be invited to address the Council.

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