



The future of Christians in Syria

Brussels, 8 September 2026

On September 8, 2026, a high-level conference was held at the European Parliament in Brussels to address the critical situation and the future of Christian communities in Syria. The event opened with keynote addresses by two major figures in international diplomacy: H.E. Mairead McGuinness (EU Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion) and the Honourable Nadine Maenza (Co-Chair of the IRF Roundtable). Convening prominent religious leaders and political representatives, all panelists reached a strong consensus on the necessary steps toward an inclusive and democratic Syria.

The panel discussions highlighted a shared concern about the future of Christians and other historically rooted communities in Syria. All panelists stressed that long-term security cannot be achieved through temporary protection or symbolic representation alone, but through equal citizenship, meaningful political participation and rights guaranteed by the constitution and the law.

Christian communities continue to face emigration, insecurity and declining participation in political and institutional life. Similar concerns affect other religious and ethnic communities across Syria. The panelists unanimously emphasized the importance of preserving Syria's religious, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity as an essential part of the country's future.

Religious freedom must go beyond the protection of places of worship. All speakers agreed it should include security, freedom of belief, protection of property and heritage, equal access to public life and the opportunity for all Syrians to participate in shaping the country's political future. Accountability for violations is also necessary to rebuild trust and strengthen the rule of law.

The discussions underlined the need for a constitution and political system that guarantee equality before the law, judicial independence, non-discrimination and meaningful participation in public institutions. Representation should be genuine and inclusive rather than symbolic.

Looking ahead, all panelists emphasized the importance of dialogue and cooperation with all relevant actors, including the transitional government, political and community representatives, civil society, religious leaders and international partners. The objective should be to identify areas of common ground and support an inclusive political transition in which all communities can contribute to rebuilding the country.

The European Union and other international partners can play an important role by encouraging inclusive dialogue, supporting accountable institutions and ensuring that the voices of Syrians from different communities are heard in decisions concerning the country's future.

The goal should be a pluralistic, democratic and stable Syria based on equal citizenship, participation and partnership — a country in which all Syrians can remain, contribute and build their future together.

Panel 1: Religious Freedom, moderated by Thibault van den Bossche, ECLJ:

- Johannes de Jong, Sallux
- Archbishop Georges Masri, Greek-Melkite Metropolitan Archbishop of Aleppo
- Bishop Georges Assadourian, Armenian Catholic Bishop of Damascus
- Father Vasilios Khamis, Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch

Panel 2: Political Representation, moderated by Metin Rhawi, ESU:

- Sanharib Barsom, Syriac Union Party
- Waddah Al Khoury, Levantine National Council
- Petrus Homi, Assyrian Democratic Party
- Sarah Aphram, Syriac Cross Belgium

Co-Organisers Committee:

- Ms Ruth Daskalopoulou, Coordinator, Director of International Relations and Special Envoy on Interreligious Dialogue, RIC srl
- Mr Metin Rhawi, Head of Foreign Affairs, European Syriac Union (ESU)
- Mr Thibault van den Bossche, Advocacy Officer for Religious Freedom, European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ)
- Mr Johannes de Jong, Director of Sallux
- Ms Sarah Aphram, Head of Syriac Cross Belgium
- Mr Peter Bronsveld, Director of Jubilee Campaign

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