

Some Preliminary Remarks on the World Council of Churches' Central Committee Statement on Religion and Violence

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Introduction

The Central Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC CC) gathered from 22nd to 28th June 2016 in Trondheim, Norway, issued a *Statement on Religion and Violence*. The purpose of these brief preliminary remarks is to provide potential readers with background and bibliographical information and some personal comments on the text of the statement. All quotations of the statement in this article are taken from the text which is published after these preliminary remarks.

Two recent examples of religiously based violence

Using as motto the biblical text of James 3:18, the statement acknowledges as a matter of deep concern the grow and spread of violence in today's world and the "ambiguous" connection of violence with religion. Two very recent examples of such type of violence are offered in the statement: the attack on His Holiness Patriarch Aphrem II Karim of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East from 19th June 2016 and the so-called "Orlando nightclub shooting" from 12th June 2016.

Just a few days before the WCC CC meeting started – and when in Trondheim the Executive Committee of WCC was meeting – the all world heard the shocking news that a suicide bomber targeted an event taking place in al-Wusta district of Qamishli, Syria, where several Christians led by His Holiness Patriarch Aphrem II Karim, Supreme Head of the Syrian Orthodox Church, were commemorating the Centenary of Assyrian Genocide.¹ The attacker detonated the bomb at the entering of the venue, as secu-

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¹ Assyrian Genocide refers to the mass killings of Christian Assyrian population especially during the First World War in the Ottoman Empire and in Persia. It is connected with the better known Armenian and Greek genocides from the same period and area as the Assyrian genocide. For more details see L. H. Alexander, Thomas La Pointre, Douglas Irvin-Ericson, *Hidden Genocides: Power, Knowledge, Memory*, Rutgers University Press, 2013; Hanibal Tra-