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Ms Frances Fitzgerald
Minister for Justice and Equality
94 St. Stephen's Green
Dublin 2

24 September 2015

Dear Minister,

We, the undersigned, write to appeal to the Irish government to offer asylum to Syrian and Eritrean Christian refugees.

We are concerned that the plight of Syrian Christian refugees may be overlooked as anti-Christian violence in some large UN refugee camps has prevented Christians from taking refuge there; they have been forced to rely instead on the kindness of local churches and Christian charities.

Our concern is that the laudable principle of providing assistance in a non-discriminatory way is in itself discriminating against those Christians in Iraq and Syria who, having fled Islamic extremist forces, have been forced out of the UN system because of further persecution from a minority of Muslim refugees in UN camps. We ask that Ireland note this fact when selecting refugees to come to Ireland and seek to take some Christians who have suffered this "double persecution".

The Archbishop of Canterbury and Hillary Clinton and other international leaders have expressed this concern as have commentators in Ireland including Senator Rónán Mullen.

In relation to Eritrea, we were encouraged to read that Ireland has pledged to take refugees from Eritrea. Christians in Ireland have had a long-standing concern about the persecution of Christians in Eritrea, which has been ongoing since the Eritrean government's decision in 2002 to close down all churches in the country apart from Orthodox, Lutheran and Roman Catholic, and the imprisonment without trial of many Christians.

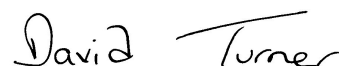
Therefore, we ask that in selecting Eritrean refugees to settle in Ireland cognisance be given to the fact that many Christians have suffered a "double persecution" i.e. persecution meted out on grounds of their religious beliefs in addition to the general repression in the country and that Ireland should seek to ensure that Christians who have suffered for their faith be included in those selected.

In making this appeal, we are simply asking that Christians who have suffered additional persecution/discrimination because of their Christian faith and who may not be receiving aid through official (UN/Red Cross) channels should not be overlooked in Irish government policy.

Yours sincerely,



Tony O'Connor
Executive Director
Evangelical Alliance Ireland



David Turner
Director
Church in Chains