File: CCC/Cda and IS/CCC Statement Re Cda and ISIS draft 1 – 17Nov14

DRAFT 1

**Canada’s Contribution to Peace and Stability in Iraq**

Addressed to the Prime Minister and/or Foreign Minister

It could be sent as a Brief with a cover letter from the President of The CCC

**1. Who is writing and why**

This statement has been prepared on behalf of the 25 members of The Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). We represent churches in Canada from the Anglican, Eastern Catholic and Roman Catholic, Evangelical, Free Church, Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox, and Historic Protestant traditions who, together, represent 85% of Christians in Canada.

Our concern is that we as Churches, and Canada as a country, make the most constructive possible contribution to the peace and well-being of all who live in Iraq and Syria, and in the wider Middle East region. As church leaders we are deeply concerned about the multiple crises in the Middle East. With heavy hearts, we note the ongoing humanitarian tragedy unfolding in Iraq and Syria and the need for international support and cooperation throughout the region.

Each of our Churches has members, counterparts, and partners engaged in the Middle East. At the same time, our own communities in Canada have among their membership former residents of the Middle East, many of whom have come to our country as refugees. We work together and are involved in local and national dialogues with Jews, Muslims, Baha’i and other faith communities in Canada to seek with all of good will the best interests of all in the Middle East.

We have consulted with these partners. The primary message heard was:

**A military response to a non-state group using terror to achieve its goals, in the absence of a broader political strategy to achieve a sustainable peace in affected countries, can prolong the violence and lead to further harm. Humanitarian support and then development assistance is the real key to building sustainable peace.**

**2. Our process of consultation**

Since the eruption of a new phase of violence in Iraq earlier in 2014, and the resulting ascendency of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS – also known as ISIL and IS), we have consulted with our Christian and multi-faith partners in the region and in Canada to discern with them how Canadian Churches and Canada can best contribute to peace and stability in Iraq.

Much of their advice to us has been given in confidence. People in the region are living with varying degrees of debilitating violence that threaten their communities. As a result, we do not want to add to the danger they live with each day by inappropriately identifying particular people or organizations in this statement.

Their responses to our questions about Canada’s role in the current military campaign are not consistent. Some of our partners welcome this military intervention, but not all. This is understandable. The danger posed by ISIS to individuals and communities is devastating, and the military response of the US-led coalition in which Canada is participating is fluid with little verifiable information available on the military campaign.

Those who do support it have emphasized to us that a military response in the absence of significant non-military interventions ultimately will fail and their position in the region as religious minorities will be made worse. A bombing campaign by the West poses particularly dangerous outcomes for vulnerable civilians. In one case we were advised that if the bombing campaign option alone prevails, then Christian communities and other minorities throughout the region will be in danger of disappearing.

In October 2014 Canada made a six-month commitment to its current military role in Iraq, and potentially Syria, that is focused on supporting the US-led air campaign. Prime Minister Harper recently has acknowledged that air strikes alone are not the decisive answer to ISIS and to what ails the region.

With this statement we are proposing in some detail where Canada should be engaged in alternatives to the air-dominated military mission. We trust these alternatives will come to the fore as Canada considers options in April 2015 when a decision will be made on renewing its current military participation in Iraq. These proposals come with humble acknowledgment that we as Churches have not done all that we can to address the crises in the Middle East.

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“Western churches considering statements of lament or empty appeals to peace should consider statements of confession for themselves on behalf of their societies.” [Lutheran Bishop Younan, September 15, 2014]

**3. Context**

Sunni disenfranchisement within Iraq has been a key element in Sunni militia making common cause with ISIS. Frustration was expressed to us that Canada and the US-led coalition have not recognized the political vacuum and chaos they helped create in the Middle East. It cannot not be rectified simply by military action. There is need to give hope to millions of young Arabs and Moslems that there is a future for them outside of ISIS and extremism.

The question is how to contain then isolate ISIS, because its elimination is not possible. Unfortunately ISIS is gaining support from more and more people in the region. Why? Because ISIS is confronting the West and saying that it can inflict on you what you have inflicted on us. Is this the way forward? Absolutely not.

IS did not suddenly appear out of thin air. Iraq and Syria are deeply troubled and fractious countries beset by violent conflict. Iraq has experienced military invasion and regime change. Syria is in the middle of a bloody civil war. Both require governments viewed as legitimate by their own people; governments that can compromise and address the grievances and demands of their various geographic parts and the many minorities being targeted by violence.

There several linked challenges that need to met: 1) religiously-sanctioned extremism;

2) new forms of religious persecution; and 3) weak national governments unable or unwilling to protect their citizens. Together we must find a way to assist in the development of civil societies that respect human rights, freedom of religion, gender justice, and freedom of expression. The people of the Middle East, as we were told, “do no not just want to survive but to thrive.”

4. **The military mission**

There was a profoundly mixed response from Middle East partners to the fact of the US-led multinational military mission in Iraq. Some faith leaders in the region welcome the US-led military mission against ISIS, but there is nuance as to how the military mission is prosecuted and what else needs to be done besides the military mission, including intensive diplomacy and expanded humanitarian support.

ISIS is a threat to the region, its states and the ethnic, religious and national groups that have been part of these societies for centuries. Dialogue with ISIS may not be possible as its core members are extremists with an ideology of exclusion and a belief that whatever they do is in the name of religion. As one partner wrote to us: “Accordingly, I for once support the US-led military mission against ISIS even though I believe that the 2003 invasion of Iraq was a major reason for the spread of chaos and extremist groups in the region, in the first place.”

Those Middle East church partners who support a US-led military mission against ISIS qualify their support by the overwhelming need for and primacy of non-military responses that will contribute to addressing root and proximate causes of armed violence and build toward sustainable peace.

Air strikes alone may destabilize the whole region. Outside of the bombing mission, Canada needs to start think more deeply about how to build bridges for mutual understanding with the wider societies in the region and with the youth in particular. If a clear strategy for non-military intervention is not developed, then the billions of dollars that will pour into military campaigns will only worsen the situation.

We recognize the complexity of the situation and that there are many unknowns. For some of our partners in Iraq, early airstrikes around Mosel by the U.S. brought a measure of safety and security. At the same time, all of our partners are deeply concerned about the impact of a prolonged military campaign.

In particular, our partners have expressed concerns that airstrikes have already brought economic chaos to parts of Syria. The bombing of a granary in northern Syria, for instance, caused grain prices to triple in a few short days. Aerial bombardments cannot secure the safety of civilians. Indeed, we know from past conflicts that airstrikes inevitably kill the people they are intended to protect. As ISIS fighters retreat and hide to avoid being attacked, bombing targets will widen. People fear that airstrikes could spread to other countries in the region, leading to a ground-level military campaign and widespread civilian casualties.

**5. Non-military responses**

Viable options exist to support the building of peace even in deeply violent and troubled countries like Iraq. By focusing disproportionately on the use of military power, Canada misses many opportunities to strengthen stability in Iraq and contribute to lasting peace.

Even those of our partners supportive of a military intervention recognize that such a response on its own will do little to build stability and lasting peace in Iraq and neighbouring countries. Non-military strategies for long-term peacebuilding are therefore of paramount importance. Had such strategies been implemented previously they might well have prevented the current rise to power of ISIS. Most importantly, a bombing campaign will not address the underlying issues that have contributed to the “radicalization” of certain people and the swift growth of ISIS support. Such issues include the lack of political inclusion, the exploitation of religious and sectarian divisions, and economic desperation.

The focus of outside assistance to Iraq and the wider region should be on how to reintegrate and rehabilitate these societies so as to ensure that ethnic and religious minorities can survive. Grassroots civil society organizations need to function, and states in the region must adopt a pluralist and open agenda for their development that will cater particularly to youth needs for employment, quality education and other basic amenities. Without such a strategy the region will go into worse and worse cycles of violence.

The Iraqi government has committed gross human rights abuses and has systematically disenfranchised the Sunni population, and marginalized other minority communities. This sad reality that has led to increasing support among Sunnis for ISIS, not necessarily because most Sunnis approve of ISIS' horrific methods, but because they simply have no protection for their rights elsewhere.

Address the political and social grievances at the root of the Iraq and Syria conflicts by providing diplomatic support for negotiations to resolve differences regarding territory, revenue-sharing, and other areas of disagreement. Support must also be given for inclusive government processes that uphold the rights of all, including minorities.

We are grateful for funds provided by Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development for NGO work with refugees and displaced persons throughout the region. Increased humanitarian assistance will alleviate suffering and communicate a measure of goodwill to those who feel abandoned.

As a priority Canada should contribute to programs that create and strengthen democratic processes in Iraq and Syria through assistance to civil society and, where possible, state structures.

Canada's ability to play a role as a neutral peacekeeper or mediator in Iraq has been deeply compromised by its current military involvement. As such, Canada does not have the credibility to engage in mediation directly, but it can work quietly to encourage and support those countries that can. Countries with large Muslim populations and not directly a party to the conflict in Iraq and Syria could play this role.

Dialogue between groups with grievances who are moderate enough to engage in such processes is a key starting point for peacebuilding. This can take place at the national level by pressuring Prime Minister Maliki to negotiate with opposition political leaders and tribal leaders. It can also take place at the level of civil society, involving support for local dialogue efforts, helping groups to assert their rights and interests and to realize ways forward to meet these without violence. Such dialogue is also critical to extending humanitarian work, as it helps to see the shared humanity and common needs and aspirations of people seen as enemies.

Significant expertise in this process exists internationally and within Iraqi civil society and should be encouraged and financially supported. Profoundly transformative and successful methodologies exist for healing and rebuilding deeply traumatized and mistrustful communities.

Canada also should support non-violent protective accompaniment, which can successfully de-escalate local conflict situations. Christian Peacemaker Teams and other groups provide examples of accompaniment being used to defuse tensions and build support for peace in communities. Neutral accompaniers play a critical role as observers and witnesses. They give both internal and external actors balanced and ongoing information that can be crucial to building understanding of the experiences of all in a conflict.

**6. Diplomacy and the United Nations**

There is no denying the complexity of this conflict, and the difficulty in sorting out with whom, and how, to find a negotiated means of ending the violence. Any international intervention–military, diplomatic, or humanitarian—must be embedded within a comprehensive, ethically defensible, and sustainable peace process.

The current military contribution by Canada of special operations forces and CF-18 bombers to a multinational force in Iraq, and potentially Syria, is taking place in the absence of a credible international political framework to build sustainable peace in the region. Canada should support sustained and energetic diplomacy under the auspices of the United Nations.

This diplomacy must involve all regional actors including Iran, the continued isolation of which is not constructive for building regional peace and security. It will require sustained diplomacy that engages Canada and its coalition partners in talks with Russia, Iran, Iraq, Syria and others in the region. To work, the commitment to diplomacy must equal or surpass the commitment to military options if the international community is to find its way beyond the violence currently being committed by ISIS.

In these circumstances experience tells us that the coercive use of force is far more likely to fuel conflict and the extremism underpinning it, rather than defeat it. Without doubt there will be delays and frustration in finding workable diplomatic solutions under the auspices of the United Nations, but Canada’s foreign policy must remain firmly grounded in the UN Charter and, more generally, in international law.

**7. Displaced people and refugees**

Christian leaders in the Middle East do not want the region emptied of Christians. But more needs to be done to assist those who need to move now with the possibility of perhaps returning. We recognize that resettlement of refugees is always less desirable than enabling people to return to their homes. And we share the concern of many of our partners in the Middle East that resettling refugees in other parts of the world may help to depopulate the region of groups who have lived there for centuries. Therefore, we emphasize humanitarian aid as a first priority over refugee resettlement.

Historically, Canada has made important contributions to alleviating the needs of people in such situations through multilateral and civil society channels. We urge Canada to address the immediate needs of displaced people, arrange for possible resettlement in Canada at least for a temporary period when appropriate, and work with others to help create the necessary conditions that would enable their voluntary and safe return.

The plight of refugees fleeing the war in Syria and Iraq requires more assistance from Canada. Our faith tradition compels us to care for the sojourner and the destitute and to advocate on their behalf. So we ask the Government of Canada to increase its humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons in the region; and to resettle more refugees on Canadian soil.

Since the Syria conflict began three years ago, 3.2 million Syrians have crossed an international border to find safety. Additionally, 6.45 million Syrians and 1.9 million Iraqis are internally displaced in their own countries. Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Turkey have all opened their doors to provide temporary refuge to those needing protection. But the capacity of these countries – Lebanon and Jordan particularly – to care for the refugees in their midst, let alone accept more, is stretched to the limit.

These host countries need much more support and assistance from the international community to help them carry out their obligations. We appreciate the $650 million which the Government of Canada has already committed to humanitarian assistance in the region, but we urge additional assistance to help the host countries shoulder the burden of refugee assistance and protection. We also urge greater support for those groups caring for internally displaced persons within Syria and Iraq.

At the same time, we are aware of the appeal made to the wider international community to do more to accept refugees from the Middle East. Indeed, in light of what he called “the greatest humanitarian crisis of our era,” the UN High Commissioner for Refugees recently appealed to the international community to accept an additional 100,000 refugees by 2015-16.

Canada’s resettlement response has been disappointingly weak. In 2013, the Government of Canada announced that by the end of 2014, it would accept 1300 Syrian refugees – 200 government-sponsored and 1100 private-sponsored. But at this point it seems only about 200 have actually arrived. In the meantime, a number of Canadian civil society groups have already urged Canada to welcome more refugees who, for whatever reason, simply cannot return to their homes.

In light of the responses of countries like Sweden and Germany, we join with others in urging the Canadian government to process, accept and resettle an additional 10,000 refugees, above and beyond refugee sponsorship targets previously committed.

Churches also are responding through Canadian and international aid agencies and networks to the humanitarian needs within Syria and the neighbouring countries to which Syrians have fled seeking refuge from the fighting in their country.

**8. Human rights and protection of minorities in the region.**

Canada can work to stop abuses committed by the Iraqi government and other actors and to promote conditions of justice and respect for the rule of law. Canada can publicly acknowledge the complexity of the situation in Iraq and the harm caused by all sides in this conflict, due to their respective failures to adhere to the rule of law.

Recognition of the human rights of all parties and acknowledgement of the valid concerns expressed by those engaged in power-based and rights-based nonviolent work is of significant importance in building peace. By reducing grievances, this peacebuilding work will reduce the base of popular support for ISIS.

We also urge that Canada lead in the protection of human rights and work with current and emerging leaders of states and civil society in the region to ensure protection for the rights of all people living there, with special attention to the rights of children, and women, as well as the personal and communal rights of all minority groups, including Christians.

The Canadian “Faith Leaders Statement” on the situation in Mosul, Iraq on August 1, 2014 condemned ISIS for threatening members of ancient Christian communities and other religious minorities in Mosul. Freedom of conscience and religion are essential to open, peaceful, and democratic societies, particularly where different cultures and faiths come into daily contact. This is the reality throughout the Middle East.

It is important that Canada lead in the protection of human rights for all people in the Middle East by working with both established and emerging state and community leaders, giving special attention to the rights of minorities, women, and children.

As part of an international policy that upholds and protects these human rights, Canada’s new Office of Religious Freedom offers our country an opportunity to model and advocate for appropriate ways to respect and protect the right to freedom of conscience and religion, including freedom to worship. These rights and their corresponding responsibilities are essential to democratic states based on a system of law, and in a world context which is increasingly intercultural and interfaith.

Non-violent direct action by Iraqis seeking to improve respect for human rights within Iraq has not received adequate support or recognition from the international community. This power-based and rights-based work was undertaken by Sunnis from December 2012 to December 2013 in particular, including nonviolent demonstrations and occupation of land at the entrance to Fallujah. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki failed to respond by making any attempt to improve his administration's record with respect to Sunni rights. Very little international support or attention has been placed on these nonviolent grassroots efforts to build more peaceful conditions in Iraq.

**9.** **Palestine/Israel**

We were told by Middle East partners that you cannot divorce what is happening in the occupation of Palestine with extremism throughout the region.

“When there is no horizon for political possibility, extremism grows. This despair has grown for several reasons. First among them is the inability of the Arab world to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict…” [Lutheran Bishop Younan, Sep 15, 2014]

They ask for a more even handed foreign policy by Canada towards problems in the world, especially the Palestinian cause.

Ongoing conflict and occupation in some countries in the region continue to infringe and violate people’s human rights and international law. Canadians place high value on respect for human rights, as embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and our own Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

We believe that God desires both Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace, security and economic sufficiency. That is part of the message of the Biblical prophets, part of the fullness of life which Jesus proclaimed, and part of the vision of the historic church of Jerusalem.

We believe that the rights which apply to one people must also apply to the other. Both Israelis and Palestinians are entitled to security, and to the right to determine their own future as a people, while respecting the rights of the other. A just and durable peace between Israelis and Palestinians is only possible if both states are guaranteed a peaceful existence within secure borders.

Palestinians have the right to exist in peace and freedom in an internationally recognized homeland and state. A just and lasting peace demands the speedy implementation of relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions, the withdrawal of Israel from settlements in Gaza and the West Bank, and the provision of territorial integrity for a Palestinian state.

The support of the international community for the development of the Palestinian state is vital and must include both timely recognition and adequate resources.

Israel must also be assured of its right to exist in peace and security within internationally recognized borders. Israel’s legitimacy as a contemporary state, long accepted in international law, must also be affirmed within the movements of the region and throughout the world. Such recognition is vital for the resolution of conflict throughout the region, for the well-being of the Jewish community internationally, and, indeed, for world peace.

In light of the most recent war on Gaza and the ever increasing Israeli settlement construction and culture of impunity, we join our Middle East partners in asking that the Canadian Government investigate its trade links with Israel and corporations involved in the occupation, as a tool to realize adherence to international legal principles and human rights.

**10. Financial support for ISIS**

Where is financial and arms supply support for ISIS coming from?

We understand from public sources that ISIS operates outside of legitimate banking channels. It uses intermediaries across the Middle East to smuggle cash in and out of the territory it controls. It taxes businesses in the areas under its control, seizes bank accounts, sells antiquities excavated from archeological sites, steals jewelry, livestock, cars and furniture, collects ransoms from kidnappings and sells oil to earn $1.5 million to $3.6 million a day. Oil and refined petroleum are being used internally and sold internationally.

While governments in the region such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Turkey do not appear to be funding ISIS directly, the governments of these countries may not have done enough to tighten financial controls in order to prevent their citizens from channeling funds to ISIS on a private basis.

What is Canada now doing, in concert with others, to track and interdict sources of revenue used by ISIS to carry on its fight?

**11. Arms Sales and Deliveries**

Canada should immediately cease to supply arms to the Iraqi government, support a broader regional arms embargo, and should sign and ratify the Arms Trade Treaty.

ISIS is now fighting with U.S. weapons acquired by overrunning Iraqi army bases. The irony should not be lost on us. Canada has provided airlift assistance to deliver military supplies to Iraqi and other security forces fighting ISIS. As of October 2014 the Royal Canadian Air Force is reported to have delivered almost 226,800 kilograms of donated military supplies to Iraqi security forces.

What steps has Canada taken to ensure that these supplies are not diverted to ISIS or other non-state actors in the future? This question also applies to Canada’s $10-million in non-lethal security assistance that includes helmets, body armour, and logistics support vehicles. Canadian arms sales to the region need to be regulated with a mind to preventing diversion.

We welcomed the approval of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) by the United Nations General Assembly on April 2, 2013. The ATT has since been signed and ratified by more than 50 countries and will come into force on December 24, 2015. The ATT will assist the international community in restricting the flow of military equipment to conflicts in the region, such as the current civil wars in Syria and Iraq, where the unrestricted flow of weapons fuels the fires of hatred and armed violence. We urge the Canadian government to join this international movement to control the movement of military goods across borders by signing and ratifying the ATT at the earliest possible date.

Canada and other coalition members should use all multi-lateral and diplomatic means available to stop the sale of arms to ISIS. Stopping arms sales from states in the region should be a top priority to weaken ISIS.

**12. Extremism and domestic radicalization**

God created us to experience the fullness of life and love. Our commitment is to live out God’s will for a just and peaceful society. We commit ourselves to dialogue with the Muslim communities throughout Canada. We recognize that violent distortions of Islam are causing misunderstanding and suffering in the world and in Canada for peace-loving Muslims as well as non-Muslim communities. Christians and Muslims share a belief in God’s mercy, and it is in that belief that we all raise our voices in prayer.

Adopting a compassionate and empathetic approach with our Muslim neighbours who are struggling to see what is happening in certain sectors of their community and how they might work against extremist impulses.

BOX

“We are especially concerned with statements suggesting that our problems stem from Islam and Muslims rather than religiously-sanctioned extremism of all sorts – Jewish, Muslim and Christian…[W]e need to develop strategies for reducing the appeal of religiously-sanctioned extremism. Some would argue that religious extremism is the natural outworking of religious commitment. My response is that religious extremism is, in fact, a perversion of religious commitment itself. I must be clear: no religion has a monopoly on extremis.” [Lutheran Bishop Younan, September 15, 2014]

We respectfully acknowledge the leadership of Muslim leaders in Canada and around the world in calling on all Muslims to commit to Islamic values of love, tolerance, respect and right conduct.

We acknowledge the leadership provided by The Canadian Council of Imams, Muslims Against Terrorism, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (representing 1.4 billion Muslims) and others in speaking out against the acts of violence perpetrated by ISIS against innocent people of all faiths. In response to growing public awareness of the radicalization of Canadian youth, the Canadian Council of Imams on June 23, 2014 stated: "We stand ready to be invited to the table to be part of meaningful discussion, to engage in preventative strategies and to find meaningful solutions to this growing threat in our country."

Canadian churches will seek to be at those same tables with their Muslim friends and neighbours to resist radicalization in all communities.

The issue of extremism, and the radicalization of primarily young men in Europe and North America who are joining the fight in Iraq and Syria, cannot be divorced from the occupation of Palestine.

Canada needs to find more ways to support religious leaders and civil society groups within Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon that are building relationships of peace and reconciliation across political, sectarian, and religious divides.

**13. Acknowledging our mistakes**

Canada also should consider how its current combat mission in Iraq might, in fact, further the goals of ISIS. It seems likely that videotaped beheadings are provocations by ISIS to draw the United States, Canada, and other coalition members directly into the fray. We need to ask what ISIS gains by Canada’s military response.

As UK commentator Dr. Paul Rogers points out, military intervention by the United States and others could in fact build support for ISIS both at home and abroad. He challenges Canada and its allies to come to grips with radicalization in our own societies. To do so we must confront some of the grievous mistakes and wrong behaviour committed in the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, and elsewhere that are exploited by groups such as ISIS and al Qaeda.

**Conclusion**

We write to encourage you and the Government of Canada to respond robustly and generously to the pressures and tensions experienced by both displaced peoples and by the host countries in the region that provide refuge; to lead in the protection of human rights with special attention to the rights of children, women and minority groups; to hold firm to the obligation for all state and non-state actors to respect international law, particularly in situations of armed conflict; and to assist us in our efforts as churches to work with local peacemakers and providers of humanitarian assistance in the region.

We commend the Government of Canada for the humanitarian assistance it is providing to the victims of violence in Iraq and Syria. We also believe that Canada can play a significant leadership role in the search for peace.

We would welcome an opportunity to meet with government representatives to share our experience and perspectives further, and to strengthen practical ways of working with local peacemakers and providers of humanitarian assistance in the region.

We continue to pray for you and the Government of Canada in exercising your responsibilities and efforts in the Middle East.

Sincerely,

Etc.

Omar Haramy, Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre in East Jerusalem

Sabeel forwards this prayer:

Heavenly Father,

You know what's going on in our world. All the wars and misery. You know the world is now faced with IS, this new enemy that shows no mercy to its victims.

Now that parts of our world are gripped by fear of the IS onslaught, Father help us to remember that You have equipped us with a weapon more powerful than any other. That You, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, have equipped us with the knowledge of love and forgiveness, and with Your Holy Spirit.

Jesus, You see us as we are, see our mistakes. You have opened the way to our Father. Through You we are forgiven, our sins forgotten. Therefore Jesus when we abhor the terrible atrocities carried out by IS jihadists, help us to remember that they are people too.

Father, Jesus, have mercy on them. Jesus, help us to defeat them with Your love, by our prayers for them. Jesus, we pray that they will somehow get to meet You. Holy Spirit, You who are the power of God here on earth, we cry out to You. Lay Yourself like a blanket over the places where the IS performs its cruelties. Smother the flames of terror which destroy everything in it path. With Your heavenly Light, make these areas unbearable for the darkness and evil which drives the IS members onwards.

Father, we implore You, send Your Angels to protect the innocent and defenseless. Protect them from these IS jihadists with Your power, smash the chains that imprison their hearts and brains. Free them from the people who poison their feelings and thoughts.

Thank You Father that we can rest safely in Your arms, Holy Spirit fill us with Your power, arm us. Jesus, walk by our sides. Thank You Jesus for defeating Evil, help us to follow in Your footsteps and defeat these IS members with the power of prayer and Your love.

All this we ask in your name

Amen