

## Church leaders with Prime Minister

**On 17 October 2014, the members of the Conference of Bishops and Representatives of the Middle Eastern Apostolic Churches in Australia and New Zealand met with the PM, the Honourable Tony Abbott, in his office in Sydney.**

The conference represents: The Maronite, the Melkite, the Antiochian Orthodox, the Syrian Catholic, the Syrian Orthodox, the Coptic Catholic, the Coptic Orthodox, the Chaldean Catholic, the Ancient Church of the East, the Armenian Catholic, and the Armenian Apostolic Churches.

The meeting took place following a request by the Conference members. The members shared with Mr. Abbott their concerns about the unfolding events in the Middle East, and their effects upon their Christian communities, especially the youth amongst them, here in Australia, and the people of the world. They also demanded the Federal Government enters in a direct contact with them, at a time when the parents and relatives of their faithful are facing an existential threat in their lands of ancestry where they have existed for more than two thousand years.

On behalf of their people, and most especially on behalf of those who have been violently displaced, the Conference members expressed their gratitude for Australia's sustained and generous humanitarian intervention. The members were also deeply appreciative of the initiatives Mr. Abbott and the Federal Government have taken to make Australia's response to this crisis an effective component of the international response to the present emergency. They also offered their support for the Counter-Terrorism legislation the PM has introduced to strengthen internal security, for without social stability and confidence in public order and harmony, the communitarian fabric will crumble.



The Conference members put Mr. Abbott in the picture of their meetings with Muslim religious leaders seeking to open doors to direct dialogue, and establish the necessary conditions for social harmony. And, they urged the PM to go on offering the Australian model of harmonious multiculturalism existence as a viable solution to the people of the Middle East in order to usher in peace and stability to a region that is on the brink of catastrophe.