



## Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Los Angeles, Southern California and Hawaii

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **COPTIC ORTHODOX BISHOP OF LOS ANGELES GIVES STATEMENT ON ABDUCTION OF TWO SYRIAN BISHOPS**

A call for prayer for the safe return of Syrian Bishops and remembrance of their slain driver

**LOS ANGELES, April 25, 2013** –The Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Los Angeles, led by His Grace, Bishop Serapion, strongly condemns the abduction of Antiochan Orthodox Metropolitan Paul Yazigi and Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan Youhanna Ibrahim, and the killing of their driver, also a deacon, as they were driving through Northern Syria outside of Aleppo on Monday, April 22, 2013.

Four days after being abducted, the two prominent Metropolitans remain missing despite reports of their return. Since the news of the kidnappings, Bishop Serapion has reached out to both Archbishop Joseph, leader of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Diocese of Los Angeles and the West, and Metropolitan Eugene Kaplan, who oversees the Archdiocese of the Western United States of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch, calling the acts contemptible and offering his deepest condolences for the family of the slain deacon who was driving the two Bishops. Both Archbishop Joseph and Metropolitan Eugene have confirmed that the two kidnapped church leaders are still being held hostage.

Bishop Serapion told his parishioners, “At this difficult time, we stand in solidarity with our brethren of the Syrian Orthodox Church, and I call on the members of the Coptic Orthodox Church to use this blessed Lenten season to offer prayers for the release and safe return of Metropolitan Paul and Metropolitan John.” Bishop Serapion further requested that the congregation “pray for the murdered deacon’s family; that God may grant them peace and comfort in this difficult time and to bring his murderers to justice.”

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For Release 2:00 p.m. April 26, 2013

The Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria is the largest Christian Church in Egypt and the Middle East. The Church was founded by St. Mark the Evangelist and Apostle in 42 A.D. Today, Coptic Christians are led by His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, and make up about 10-15 percent of Egypt's population.

With over 30 parishes, the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Los Angeles and Hawaii' is the largest Coptic diocese outside of Egypt. Led by His Grace Bishop Serapion, the Diocese of Los Angeles accounts for 12,000-15,000 families.

Continuous persecution of Egypt's Christian population paved the way for a Coptic Diaspora throughout the world, with a great number finding refuge in the United States where Christians are given the same opportunities and freedoms as everyone else.

Today, the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Los Angeles serves to create strong ties with the community at large and improve relations with other churches and faiths, while still preserving and sharing the Church's rich and ancient heritage.

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