

A photograph of three children standing in a dimly lit room. On the left, a boy in a red and white t-shirt with his arms crossed. In the center, a boy in a white and checkered shirt. On the right, a girl in a red shirt and a light blue headscarf. The lighting is dramatic, with a strong light source from the right casting long shadows.

# CANDLE-LIT PRAYER VIGILS FOR SYRIA: HOW TO GUIDE

*Marking the third anniversary of the conflict*



## BACKGROUND

The third anniversary of the Syria conflict will act as a grim reminder to the world of its failure to stop the suffering. As the world's media once again reflects on the crisis at this time, we need to make sure that we use the opportunity to demonstrate to world leaders that they need to do more to help the children of Syria. In 2014, with more than 100,000 killed in the conflict, and 300 people fleeing their homes every hour, the need for a powerful campaign is greater than ever before.

## THE PRAYER LIGHT VIGILS

For three years, the world has abandoned millions of innocent children, women, and men caught up in the violence in Syria. A coalition of NGO and civil society partners around the world will be mobilising their members on the weekend of 15th March 2014, the 3rd anniversary of the conflict, to demand that world leaders help all those caught in the conflict. We will shine a light on their struggle to survive; we will stand #WithSyria.

We at World Vision are seeking to mobilise Churches and Youth Groups to hold a Prayer Vigil using candles or lights to pray for the children of Syria.

In the run-up to the third anniversary of the Syria conflict, we ask you to join in a global movement to mobilise Christian individuals, organisations, and churches around the world with the simple, unifying symbol of light & prayer, highlighting people's struggle to survive the conflict in Syria and to offer a vision of hope for the future:

- On March 14th schools, communities, celebrities and individuals will be encouraged to host their own prayer light vigils
- On the eve of the anniversary, flagship events with vigils around global landmarks will take place in key cities around the world, creating a global call – unprecedented in its size – for solidarity with the Syrian people.
- This will be complemented by a large scale social media strategy to amplify the popular engagement worldwide

We're encouraging organisations across the globe to encourage their members/communities/partners to host their own prayer light vigils. International vigils will help ensure that the public engagement and media coverage of the vigils span the globe and will help multiply the impact of this rallying cry to our world leaders.

## OBJECTIVES

- ➔ To Honour God with our lives by aligning with his purposes and plans by praying for the children of Syria.
- ➔ Mobilise our Church Partners and Christian Organisation partners to be a part of the prayer light vigil for the children of Syria.
- ➔ Strengthen the prayer partnership process with our churches and global impact Christian audiences.
- ➔ Deliver High Quality Prayer Content for Prayers and Thanksgiving during the Light Prayer Vigil.
- ➔ Demonstrate global solidarity with children, men, and women, struggling each day to survive the Syria conflict.
- ➔ Ensure global media coverage of the candle-lit vigils and campaign messaging behind them.
- ➔ Harness this global public concern to demonstrate to world leaders the need to do more to end the bloodshed and get aid to all those who need it.

## HOW TO PUT ON A VIGIL

### *When should the vigil take place?*

Candlelit prayer vigils will ideally take place at sunset on the 14th March but can also take place any time in the week before the anniversary.

### *Who should participate?*

It will be important that as many people as possible participate, including children. You can also encourage local schools, churches and youth groups to join as they'll help by calling upon God together to bring change in this situation.

### *Where should the vigil take place?*

Prayer Vigils can take place outside a local or national monument, or in a local church hall (but try to avoid embassies in order not to overtly politicise the vigils) - peace monuments, tourist symbols and symbols of political change can be much more effective.

Look for a landmark building that is known throughout your region, country or the world that is large, imposing and well-lit at night. Assemble your vigil in a location where it is possible to create a photograph and you can see people holding candles and the entire building. You'll have to be some distance from this building in order to achieve this.




In countries where the campaign have organised the illumination of a landmark building (this will be in Russia, US, UK, France and Jordan – exact locations TBC) vigils can take place near these and ideally will form part of the illumination ceremony.

### *What should happen at the Prayer Vigil?*

We have a variety of resources to help you with your prayer vigil. **You can download each of these resources at <http://bit.ly/prayforsyria>**

## Some of the resources you will find include:

**Story Cards of Children** - It will be important for Christian groups to hear the stories of the stories of children. We have created six story cards that can be distributed to your participants, so they can hear the stories of real children who have been affected by this crisis. These stories can also be read out loud lead people in prayer for this child and children in a similar situation. You can also create a "Lives on the Line" activity where the cards are placed up on a clothesline with a lantern or light next to it. Be creative.



**MAIS' STORY**

Mais is a refugee. Her brothers search bins in the neighbouring town in hope of striking lucky and finding some additional food scraps, or maybe some clothes someone has thrown out.

"I used to have fun with my friends and talk about living in a tent, or spending some time in a tent for fun, like an entertainment, but I thought I would never live in a tent for real, but it is happening for real."

"Sometimes I pretend that I am not in Lebanon, that I am with my friends in Syria. I imagine that and feel it, and then when I think about it again I see myself in Lebanon. This is for real - I am in Lebanon."


The power of her incredible imagination only goes so far. She is a smart girl whose favourite subject was biology. She would like to be a science teacher when she grows up.

"It's like a bad dream, I couldn't believe.... I couldn't believe that our house was totally destroyed and it was all on the ground." She knows that if she goes to return to her homeland, things will not be the same. "If I return to Syria, I know I will sleep on the ground."

Unfortunately, these days Mais doesn't play. She's searching for any kind of work to help contribute to their dire situation when she should be in school, and picking tents on the weekends playing house with her friends.

- Pray for Mais' desire to be a science teacher and for the opportunity to continue to grow in an environment of learning.
- Pray for Mais' brothers to find food that will feed the family.
- Pray for the hope of peace to one day return home to Syria.
- Pray that the children of Syria don't lose another year to bloodshed and suffering. Pray that we don't lose this generation of children.

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**NASRELLA'S STORY**

Nasrella is a sweet, 10 year old boy with a kind disposition. He's smart, but thankful, thankful to live in a tent in the Bekaa Valley as long as it's far away from the bombs and shelling that was so devastating back home in Syria.

This recent settlement has been home for 7 months. Back home, he had 11 close friends. One of these friends is here with him now.... "Only Hussein came with me from Syria," he says. When asked about his other friends, he replies, "I don't know where they are, I don't know if they are ok - I don't know anything about them."

Back home in Syria, he won merit awards. "They gave me a merit award because I was smart and very good at school," he says. "I miss it (school) so much, because I want to learn," he says. It's a story that's all too common. Nasrella wants to be a teacher. But unfortunately teachers need to have an education before they can teach others.

He smiles when he talks of his father, who he misses greatly. His father has not been in contact for 7 months, and they fear the worst. But what stands out about the beautiful boy is his gratitude for what he does have. "I feel this place (tent settlement in Lebanon) is better than the other one (home in Syria), we live here in peace. We are away from the clothes. I wouldn't change a single thing about this tent."

- Pray for Nasrella as he yearns to find out what happened to his father and friends.
- Pray that Nasrella will reach his goal of becoming a teacher to inspire others around him to reach their goals.
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**Prayer for Syria** - We have a video and handout that you can use to lead a call and response prayer for the children of Syria. The prayer has been constructed to follow the Lord's Prayer. You are welcome to use either or both at your event.

### NO LOST GENERATION

A PRAYER FOR THE CHILDREN OF SYRIA

*In March, Syria will be entering a fourth year of conflict... a conflict that has split a nation, resulted in violence on a massive scale, and forced millions of children from their homes.*

*Human efforts have failed to make a difference and change this atrocity. Join us in boldly coming before the Lord and asking God to do what only God can do by praying for God's peace to be revealed through us and through those in authority.*

**LEADER:** Heavenly Father, every day children are living through unspeakable devastation. [ Every hour, 300 people flee their homes in fear. Every month, 6,000 more people are killed.

**ALL:** Merciful Father, hear our prayers. We know all things are reconciled through you. We pray for these children. We pray for peace in Syria.

**LEADER:** We know you abhor the suffering of children. The children of Syria cannot afford to lose another year to the horrors of this conflict - and the world cannot afford to lose an entire generation.

**ALL:** Lord, we ask that you soften the hearts of leaders who have not heard the cries for a peaceful resolution. We plead for your mercy, that all attacks on civilians stop and for your intervention so that all obstacles to humanitarian assistance be eliminated.

**LEADER:** Many of Syria's children have been traumatized as homes and schools have been destroyed, many have been the victims of indiscriminate violence and witnessed unspeakable abuse.

Millions of children have been forced to flee, millions more have been trapped inside Syria without basic necessities as families fear for their lives.

**ALL:** We pray for the children affected by the conflict to have access to the learning, protection, and support they need to recover from trauma so they can have hope and play a meaningful role in the rebuilding of their country.

**LEADER:** We confess that we have not done enough. It is challenging to hold onto hope. So many attempts to stop this war have failed and we are at a loss to know what to do.

**ALL:** Lord, grant us your perseverance. Let our hearts be broken by the things that break your heart. Stir our lives into action so that we might be aligned with you.

**LEADER:** This battle in Syria is not only against flesh and blood. These are spiritual realities. The evil one who seeks destruction, desolation and death wants to keep perpetuating this intense suffering.

**ALL:** We pray that the children of Syria don't lose another year to bloodshed and suffering. We pray that they live in peace, receive an education, and are protected. We pray that we don't lose this generation of children.

For this is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Learn more and act at <http://www.wvl.org/syria-crisis>

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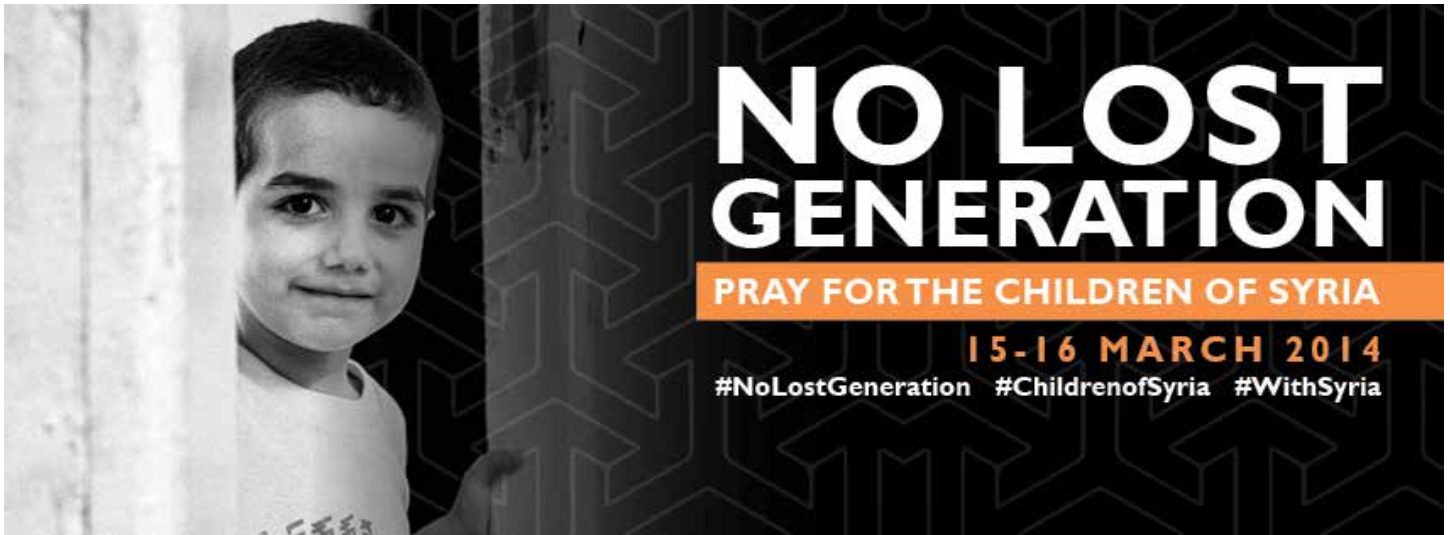
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**Advocacy Petition** - We would also encourage you to take action by signing a petition and letting your local media teams know of your call for peace in this situation. The petition being signed is found at <http://bit.ly/nolostgeneration>

**Promotional Materials** – You will also find posters, Facebook banners, church bulletins, and other resources to help promote your event. Find all of these resources at <http://bit.ly/prayforsyria>



### **One Moment Captured and Shared**

#### ***What should the prayer vigil look like?***

The vigil should be as striking as possible to ensure that we're able to produce compelling images that can be used for social and traditional media. To do this you can use a few different tactics:

#### **a. Use different kinds of light**

Candle-lit vigils are simple and can be organised anywhere. You might also want to use light pens, flashlights, or sparklers (taking the necessary safety precautions!).

#### **b. Make a shape with your vigil**

You can create a bold shape with candles and/or people holding them. This creates something which is instantly photogenic and can create a strong, bold image. This could be #WITHSYRIA, the campaign's hashtag, or simply WITH SYRIA. To increase the best angle for your photo consider taking a small step-ladder, or consider if there is a building you might be able to photograph from.

#### **c. Colour and scale**

Another way to create a visually compelling image is to use a large number of candles, of different colours, or use mirrors, rose petals and other colourful objects. The examples show that close-ups of children beside candles can work really well. Sometimes the best picture will be with just one child.

#### ***How can we ensure our vigils have impact?***

In the run up to the anniversary, we'll highlight the vigils happening locally and globally via social media to get as many people as possible talking about the third anniversary of the conflict and the urgent need to alleviate the suffering of Syrians. We'll also provide a template press release and media guidance to help get coverage of your vigil into your local media. A selection of international photos will go to media outlets to ensure the impact and reach of our global efforts are maximised.



## CHECKLIST FOR PUTTING ON A VIGIL (Please adapt this for your prayer Vigil)

### Who's in charge?

- Who's the overall prayer vigil coordinator? And do you have separate people to do the media outreach, mobilisation, and photo coordination?
- Do you have a great group of volunteers to help you? Are they prepared to intervene if anything goes wrong?

### Who's going to be there?

- Have you contacted your key people in the church & youth group , people you want to include?
- Who's going to speak and share the stories ? Do you have somebody to rally the troops and make sure everybody goes away feeling inspired?
- How many people are coming? The more the better for the image.

### Make sure you get the attention!

- Have you told the media?
- Have you got a photographer?
- Make sure the photographer sends this to the local media picture desks)
- Citizen journalism is the future! Get people in the crowd videoing, photographing and recording your event and sending to the media and sharing this through social media.
- On Twitter, there are hash tag options that you can choose to use depending on the key relationships you have with your partners across the globe. Significant hashtags include:
  - #ChildrenofSyria
  - #NoLostGeneration
  - #WithSyria

### Have you got a great location?

- Does it work visually for the photo (see guidelines above)?
- Is it safe for children and their families?

- Do you need permission to gather? And if so have you got it?

### **Will your vigil run smoothly?**

- What time are you telling people to gather for your vigil?
- What time are you telling the media to come to your vigil? (check it's dark!)
- What's your plan to mobilise people to come to the vigil?
- Are you providing transport and allowing time for delays to get there?
- Have you checked with emergency services - have you told the police & fire brigade?

### **Is it safe?**

- Have you done a risk assessment?
- Is there a First Aider and a Child Safe Participation Officer?
- Are these candles or nightlights in containers, and who is in charge of distributing, lighting and collecting the candles?
- Which adults (guardians or teachers) are responsible for children present? And have they been legally checked?
- Do you have consent forms to use the images of children?
- Have you got a plan in case of an emergency or anything catches fire?

### **Have you got everything you need?**

- Candles – and something safe to hold them with.
- Matches – that only adults are responsible for!
- Flyers to give to bystanders so they can understand what the prayer vigil is for?
- Clothes Line – rope across the space
- Printed off the stories of the children “ Lives on the Line
- Lanterns
- Video Projection and screen if needed.
- Decorations: do you have flowers or decorations to help make a beautiful image?
- First aid kit: prepare for things to go wrong. That way, they won't.

