**FINAL**

**THE COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO**

Speaking on behalf of thirty-six religious communities in the Metropolitan Chicago area, we join the voices of our fellow religious and civic leaders around the world in condemning with the utmost force the heinous acts of violence perpetrated by ISIS in the recent beheading of two Japanese citizens and the burning alive of a Jordanian pilot. These unspeakable acts of barbarism and total disregard for human life—made blasphemous by being done falsely in the name of God—join with similar acts of violence and terrorism that have stricken the human family in recent days*.*

The Council of Religious Leaders join Jewish, Christian, Muslim and other religious leaders throughout the world, along with civic leaders and people of good will everywhere, in unconditionally condemning such depraved violence.

These horrible acts of terrorism impact our own Chicago community. Their perpetrators seek to recruit our young men and women in their evil campaign of hate and violence. Their false invocation of religion as the justification for their actions puts a strain on our own religious communities and opposes everything for which authentic religion stands.

Spurred by these terrible tragedies, the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago is determined to redouble its long-standing commitment to work together for the common good in a spirit of mutual respect and friendship. For over a quarter century, we promoted common values of justice, peace, and respect for life, and collaborated with civic leaders to promote the welfare of our communities.

In the weeks ahead we will continue to lift up, foster, and celebrate examples of people of diverse religious traditions in our region who are working together in peace and mutual respect*.* We will continue to work in partnership with city, county and state officials to address issues of racism and economic inequity that bring needless suffering and violence to our communities.

Finally, we pray for God’s mercy in the face of such terrible human evil and ask that God’s peace will overcome the violence that plagues our world.

 February 10, 2015