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ASIA/IRAQ - Christian Bishops of Mosul send message to the government: “Will the blood of Christians be shed with impunity?”

Mosul (Agenzia Fides) – "The authorities must take full responsibility in order to preserve the Christian presence in Mosul. We need international intervention to push the central and local government to act immediately.” This is what Fides has been told by Archbishop Georges Casmoussa, Syrian Catholic Archbishop of Mosul, while in the city there seems to be no sign of an end to the kidnappings and murders of Christians. Two days ago the last victim, the fifth in a week: Adnan al Dahan, an Orthodox Christian age 57, who had been kidnapped a week ago, was found murdered.

For this reason, the Christian Bishops of Mosul have written and delivered a very clear appeal to the local government. Bishop Casmoussa told Fides about the contents of the message, which is signed by Archbishop Gregorios Saliba, Syrian Orthodox Archbishop, by Archbishop Georges Casmoussa, and by Archbishop Emile Nona, Chaldean Catholic Archbishop.

The message denounces violence against "our Christian sons and daughters in the city of Mosul," with the murder of peaceful and innocent people, noting "a premeditated plan to place pressure on Christian Churches, to achieve a certain agenda." All efforts of the city's religious leaders, Christians and Muslims, have not been enough to end the violence against the faithful in Christ, the text notes: "These repeated acts give the impression that we are unwanted in this city, which is our homeland.

The Bishops recall that "Christians have participated directly and with great effectiveness in building civilization in Mosul, in the city and the entire region, offering a fruitful contribution in art, culture, thought, creativity, as well as on an economic and social level. They are recognized by all as "peaceful and constructive members of society." And they ask: "And this is how we are rewarded? With being exiled from our city, with exclusion from public life, with expulsion from our land?"

The text continues: "Will the blood of our children, who are sons of Iraq, the blood of our bishops and priests, continue to be shed with impunity, without any search for the killers? Will the state remain indifferent?"

"For this - the Bishops write - we ask the government in Mosul and the central government in Baghdad to assume full responsibility, to work for public safety, especially for the faithful of the Christian minorities, who are the most vulnerable and the most peaceful among the peaceful."

The message concludes: "We demand that the men of government give priority to respecting the law and the state, protecting the security and confidence of citizens." "We ask that those who govern do not waste their strength in partisan struggles for power and hegemony," but that “criminal acts are prosecuted and the perpetrators and instigators of violence are brought to justice.” (PA) (Agenzia Fides 22/02/2009)

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