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ASIA/IRAQ - Bishop Warduni: a vote for rights, peace, and religious freedom

Baghdad (Agenzia Fides) – "We urge all Christians to vote and elect candidates who work for the good of Iraq, so that the country will once again see respect for human rights and religious freedom." This is the appeal conveyed to Fides by Bishop Shlemon Warduni, Vicar of the Chaldean Patriarchate of Baghdad, on the eve of parliamentary elections scheduled for March 7.

In an interview with Fides, Bishop Warduni said: “Parliament has 5 seats reserved for Christians. We hope that they go to people prepared for this delicate task of representing the Christian communities, to promote our rights, to govern our wounded nation, and contribute to building a new Iraq."

As for the difficult time the community is experiencing, the Bishop says: "The Christian community is very disappointed. I see fear and despondency on the faces of the people. This is not the first time that Christians suffer such a wave of violence. Many faithful lose hope of a peaceful life and flee abroad."

"The life of Christians in this nation does not appear to be among the priorities. We are victims of fanaticism and general instability, which leaves a free hand to those who want to use violence to intimidate. The causes are many and varied, but the end seems clear: continually reduce the Christian presence in Iraq, marginalize it, and deprive it of any rights."

The danger today, according to the Prelate, is exploitation: "We do not want our cause is to be seen as a political measure. We do not give up hope for a new era, a new time marked by the triumph of law, justice, stability, and a guarantee for human rights for all. We pray and work for peace and for freedom of religion, not just freedom of worship. The country, in order to grow, needs peace and security."

Bishop Warduni concludes: "We were deeply moved at the Pope's words, which encourage us and make us feel the support of the faithful around the world. We know that we are not alone and we thank him for that. But here, the situation remains very difficult. We pray especially for those in pain and poverty and entrust our condition of suffering to the Lord." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 4/3/2010)

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