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ASIA/IRAQ - Archbishop Casmoussa calls for a UN investigation on anti-Christian violence

Munich (Agenzia Fides) – "An international inquiry should be done by the United Nations, to investigate and understand who is behind the continuing violence and attacks on the Christian community in Iraq." This is what Fides was told in an interview with Archbishop George Casmoussa, Syrian Catholic Archbishop of Mosul, present in Munich (Bavaria) at the invitation of Missio, the Pontifical Mission Societies in Germany. The Archbishop will also hold several meetings with the German Bishops, briefing them on the critical conditions of Christians in Iraq.

Archbishop Casmoussa spoke on the current heated atmosphere in the Iraqi scenario, after the series of attacks on May 10 (20 explosions and 125 dead in one day), while a prominent leader like Iyad Allawi has suggested even the risk of new "sectarian civil war" in Iraq. The Archbishop told Fides: "Everybody talks about peace and say they want it, but who is really a peacemaker? A key responsibility lies with our politicians who must provide evidence of having at heart the welfare and security of the Iraqi people. If politicians have talks in peace, maturity, and fairness, the whole country will be at peace."
In this scenario, the presence of Christians and other religious minorities is becoming more difficult: "We Christians call for a place where we can live peacefully, cultivating our faith and contributing to the development and progress of the nation," said the Archbishop. "We need the government to guarantee us protection against those who want to eliminate us. After numerous attacks and violence, I have called for the intervention of the United Nations – not for a new military contingent, but to initiate an investigation that determines who is behind these continued acts of violence against Christians."
The Council of Christian Church Leaders in Iraq, which joins together 14 religious leaders, will meet in late May to consider those issues and try to reach a common position to "act against terrorism and the protection of Iraqi Christians" the Archbishop tells Fides.
At this stage, the international community and Western governments "are being asked to put pressure on Iraq, so that it may set in motion all the necessary means to protect the lives of minorities."
The words and appeals of the Holy Father, notes Archbishop Casmosussa, "are a great help for us, an encouragement and a strong psychological support. We receive the words like those of a father who cares for his children. We ask the entire Universal Church to continue to care for the little flock of the faithful Iraqis." (PA)
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