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ASIA/IRAQ - Two more Christians killed, as massacre-site church re-opens; protests on Facebook

Baghdad (Agenzia Fides) – The liturgy is once again being said at the Syrian Catholic Church of Our Lady of Deliverance in Baghdad, after the massacre of Christians on October 31, but there is fear among the faithful. Local sources report that two Christians were killed yesterday in Baghdad, in situations investigators have yet to be identify. "It is constant. People are no longer surprised by these acts of violence that occur daily," Fides was told by a priest in Baghdad. The Iraqi faithful, meanwhile, have received large international support that is also expressed on the web, using the social networking site Facebook.

Yesterday, Sunday, November 7, a week after the massacre of 58 people, more than 200 faithful attended the first Mass in the Church of Our Lady of Deliverance. Among imposing security outside the building, the church was reopened. The interior of the church was cleaned and placed back in order, although there were still bloodstains on the walls.

Sources told Fides that the faithful present for the celebration came wearing black robes as a sign of mourning, and carrying lighted candles to remember the brothers killed. A large cross formed by lighted candles was formed on the floor in the middle of the aisle, next to the names and photos of the dead. The parish priest, Fr. Mukhlas Habash, who celebrated the Eucharist, said that Christians pray for the victims and their attackers, recalling Jesus' commandment "love your enemies," and calling all to forgiveness. The priest called the two priests who were killed "martyrs." According to eyewitness accounts, one of them, Fr. Thaier Saad Abdal, told the terrorists "Kill me, not this family with children," shielding them with his body. "The future of Iraqi Christians - said the priest – is not in the hands of men, but in the hands of God."

Meanwhile, worldwide Iraqi Christians in the diaspora are making their voices heard and protesting against the massacre of the faithful in Iraq via Internet. A major campaign was launched on the social networking site Facebook, with a page entitled: “The March Against the Ethnic Cleansing of Iraq’s Indigenous Christians,” which already has 45,000 members. Since June 2004, 66 churches have been attacked by bombs and thousands of people have died. Iraqi Christians abroad are organizing public protests, demanding protection for the faithful in Iraq, in many cities worldwide, including London, Cairo, Sydney, Los Angeles, Detroit, Chicago, Las Vegas, Toronto, and other cities in Germany, Sweden, and Holland. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 08/11/2010)

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