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ASIA/IRAQ - Projects for a new hospital and university: signs of hope for Catholics in the country

Baghdad (Agenzia Fides) – In a recent statement issued by the Pontifical Legal Society "Aid to the Church in Need", Archbishop Bashar Warda of Erbil, announced a plan to build a new Catholic hospital and a university in the Country as "symbols of hope" in an area filled with tension and violence. In a message received by Fides from Catholic News Agency, the Archbishop said that the two buildings planned for Ankawa, on the outskirts of the Kurdish capital of Erbil, will be built on 322,917 sq. metres of land allocated for the university, and another 86,111 sq. metres for the hospital, which will have 100 beds, eight operating rooms and a medical room. In the interview, Archbishop Warda said that, before they begin the work that could be completed in a couple of years, it is essential to launch a campaign to raise funds. "Our society needs schools, universities and hospitals, and these new projects offer us the opportunity to encourage Christians to build a future for themselves here," said the Archbishop.
Over the last decade the Christians in Iraq have decreased from 800,000 to 200,000. The recent bloody conflicts have contributed to growing unease in the area. "We do not want Christians to leave Iraq," said the Archbishop, who added that both initiatives would provide jobs, training and other opportunities for thousands of Christians fleeing to Kurdistan. The hospital and the university will be owned by the Archdiocese of Erbil, which will look after the management, but the Archbishop emphasised that both will be open to all people, regardless of their religion. (AP) (3/2/2011 Agenzia Fides)

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