



## **ASIA/IRAQ- The country is one of the most insecure places in the world for children**

Baghdad (Fides Service) - Decades of war and international sanctions have turned Iraq into one of the most unsafe places for children in the Middle East and North Africa. In town, in fact, there are about 3 and a half million children living in poverty, 1 million and a half under the age of 5 are malnourished, 100 die every day. According to UNICEF, the government should do more for children. To achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set by the UN, over 400 thousand malnourished Iraqi children should receive adequate food, and about 700 000 should be enrolled in school. The infant mortality rate should be reduced by 100 000 units, and about 3 million children need an adequate health care.

In addition, these children are often exploited as child soldiers and kamikases, because they arouse less suspicion and can move more easily at checkpoints, they are also used to lure the security forces in ambushes. The (Shia) Mahdi Army have recruited and used child soldiers since the beginning of the conflict. In 2008 about 376 were killed and 1,594 wounded, in 2009 362 were killed and 1,044 wounded. In 2010, the victims were at least 194 and 232 wounded, mostly in Baghdad and in the governorates of Diyala and Ninewa. Another threat to children is made up of unexploded remnants of war, which kill people and cause long term damage. On the territory of Iraq there are about 2.66 million cluster bombs and 20 million landmines, spread over an area of over 1,700 square miles. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 05/07/2011)