



ASIA/MIDDLE EAST - Christians before the conflicts in the Middle East

Rome (Agenzia Fides) - The demands of the Arab peoples in order to obtain constitutional, economic and social reforms are just and legitimate, but what is not right is the fact of imposing such changes "from the outside and through force", as the choice of triggering "violence and war" in the name of these objectives. This is one of the criteria of discernment which arose during a meeting of the Patriarchs, Cardinals and Bishops during the works of the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization being held at the Vatican. The meeting - which was attended, among others by Cardinals Timothy Dolan, Leonardo Sandri, Louis Tauran and Pèter Erdo, along with the greek-Melkite Patriarch Gregoire III Laham - was held on Monday, October 15 at the Pontifical Maronite College, on invitation of the Patriarch of the Maronite Church Bechara Boutros El Rai, and provided the opportunity for a debate on the role of Christians in Lebanon and in the Middle East, delicate political-historical situation.

The summary of the meeting, which Fides Agency received, stresses that compared to the Syrian crisis, the Synodal Fathers present at the meeting unanimously called for a solution to the conflict and the implementation of reforms to be achieved "through dialogue and political and diplomatic negotiation." The participants also stressed that, at the base of the tensions and divisions in the Middle East, there is "the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict", in relation to which the international community is called to favor the implementation of internationally legitimized resolutions.

The Patriarchs, Cardinals and Bishops gathered at the Pontifical Maronite College also shared the regret for the policy of some Western and Middle East powers that "exploit the popular protests and their demands to sow chaos and promote internal and sectarian conflicts "concerned only to increase the traffic of weapons and assert their strategic interests. They all agreed that in this historical stage the road map for Christians in the Middle East is represented by the words of Benedict XVI during his recent apostolic visit to Lebanon. The invitation to all Christians in the Middle East is to "persevere in their unique witness the Muslim-Christian coexistence," even resisting the cultural and religious conflicts which are fomented by short-sighted political interest "by some regional and international powers" . (GV) (Agenzia Fides 18/10/2012)