



ASIA/LEBANON - Patriarchs and Catholic Bishops' appeal of the Middle East: Even Muslims contribute to guaranteeing the freedom and equality of their fellow Christians

Harissa (Agenzia Fides) - The second Assembly of Patriarchs and Catholic Bishops of the Middle East came to an end last night, December 5, in Harissa, with the approval of two documents in which the pastoral care of the Catholic Church Leaders is condensed before the emergencies, also political, social and humanitarian experienced by Arab Countries at the present time.

The first document, long and complex, offers tips and practical strategies to put into practice in all aspects of individual and community life, the teachings in Ecclesia in the Middle East, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation that Benedict XVI gave the Bishops of the region and their Churches during his recent visit to Lebanon.

According to information collected by Fides Agency, the second document signed by the participants at the Assembly in Harissa is an appeal to the international community and all people of good will concentrated on three key points.

The Patriarchs and Catholic Bishops of the Middle East primarily emphasize the urgent need to finally find a "just and peaceful solution to the Palestinian issue," referred to as the point of origin of all Middle East conflicts.

The second point is an urgent call to do everything to put an end to conflicts and violence that disrupt the lives of the peoples of the region, putting in place the path of reconciliation and peace that guarantees everyone the freedom and protection of their human dignity. The appeal makes explicit reference to the situation in tormented Syria.

The third point focuses on the plight of Christians in the lands of the Middle East. Church leaders are urged to strengthen their communion and full cooperation to promote the permanence and continuity of the indigenous presence, active and effective, of Christians in Arab societies.

The appeal on this point is also addressed to Muslims who are called to contribute to the preservation of the full rights of their fellow Christians in the recognition of a common and shared citizenship.

Yesterday the participants at the Assembly in Harissa expressed their unanimous condolence for the death of His Beatitude Ignatius IV Hazim, Greek-Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, who died in Saint Georges hospital in Beirut at the age of 91. His Beatitude Bechara Boutros Rai, Patriarch of Antioch of the Maronites, on behalf of all the Patriarchs and Catholic Bishops in Harissa paid tribute to the "great wisdom and dedication" with which Patriarch Hazim led his Church for 33 years. (GV) (Agenzia Fides 06/12/2012).