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Fondata nel 1927

ASIA/SYRIA - Appeal from the people of Mesopotamia, left to themselves

Hassake (Agenzia Fides) - Hassake, the capital of Mesopotamia (Eastern Syria), is a ghost town, isolated from the rest of the world. The population is suffering from the cold weather, there is no fuel, water is scarce, there is only one hour of electricity a day. Over 25 thousand Christians (Syrian Orthodoxs, Syrian Catholics, Chaldeans, Armenians) are crowded in the city, many of whom have sought refuge from the surrounding areas, have launched an alarm for survival through some of the messages sent to Fides Agency.
After the appeal issued two months ago by the three Bishops of the region, who "launched an SOS to avoid catastrophe" (see Fides 23/11/2012), "nothing has been done: no one cares for the exhausted population of Hassake, who urgently need humanitarian aid," the Bishops affirm. The Bishops, such as the Syrian Catholic Mgr. Jacques Behnan Hindo and the Syrian Orthodox Mgr. Matta Roham, are intensifying contacts with other Christian Syrian leaders and with humanitarian organizations, but the response they receive leaves no loopholes, "It is impossible to bring aid to Hassake because it is too dangerous and lacks minimal security conditions."
After the town of Tall Tamr, the region is infested with Islamist groups and terrorists that impose several checkpoints on the roads. These are the militants "Jubhat el Nosra," Salafist faction that even the United States has recently added to the black list of "terrorist groups". They are added to common criminals who commit robbery, kidnapping, looting, even in the city. The population "is slowly dying, left to itself," stresses to Fides Fr. Ibrahim, a Christian priest resident in Hassake.
"The people are hungry and living in fear," he says. "Every day, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, there is a sort of curfew, because armed groups roam the streets. This is followed by kidnappings, sometimes with ransom demands, not always. In recent days, two brothers of the Bashr family and two young members of the Fram family were killed at point blank range on the street. Young Christians are threatened and terrified, 90% have fled the city. If young people leave, what will our churches be needed for? " He says sadly.
According to what Georgius tells Fides, a Christian university student whose family is in Hassake and has taken refuge in Lebanon, "the militia with black flags of the Jubhat el Nosra group have targeted all young people who were born between 1990 and 1992. They look for them, accuse them of being soldiers for the national service and kill them cold-bloodedly. They want to terrorize young people to prevent them from enlisting." The population of Hassaké, weary and tired, reports Georgius, "fears the final assault on the city that could cause the definitive exodus of Christians from Hassake." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 17/01/2013)

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