



ASIA/IRAQ - Archbishop Sako's appeal: "What future for Christians in the Middle East?"

Kirkuk (Agenzia Fides) - The situation in the Middle East "is worrying, as are certain things that one hears on the Arab Spring by certain leaders." This is how the appeal on the future of the Middle Eastern Christians begins launched today by the Chaldean Archbishop of Kirkuk, Louis Sako. The message, published exclusively by Fides Agency, hopes for an initiative of the Holy See and the universal Church to mobilize the international community in support of Christians in the Middle East.

According to Mgr. Sako, the "mixture of ethnicities, religions and languages" present in the Middle East inevitably leads to tensions and conflicts, because in that region of the world "a criterion of citizenship able to integrate everyone, regardless of religion or ethnicity they belong has never been established." Disruptive processes now taking place in Iraq - and that in the future may also affect Syria - according to the Archbishop "worsen the situation," because in the voids of institutional power safety is no longer guaranteed and open spaces for action concerning criminal and extremist groups.

In this context, the Christians in the Middle East uncertainty is easily transformed into anxiety and fear. "We wonder if it is still possible to think of a harmonious way of living together" the Chaldean Archbishop writes, referring to the discrimination suffered by those who do not follow what he calls the "State religion". A condition that, according to Monsignor Sako, is aggravated by the Middle East strategies put in place by the various geopolitical parties: "The international community" writes the Archbishop, with clear reference to the Syrian conflict "believes that we can improve the situation by supporting an uncertain program to reach democracy through weapons! The result is the clash between armed opposition and a system that destroys everything." Mgr. Sako is that the aid of the Church to the Christians of the Middle East is manifested in ever more concrete forms. "It is said that Christianity has flourished here and that our presence is important," notes the Archbishop of Kirkuk. According to the Archbishop "these churches of apostolic origin deserve adequate support from the universal Church in their mission of communion and witness". An "international support, favored by the universal Church, would be a great help to try to ensure a decent life for all." In particular, the Holy See is recognized by the Archbishop of the Eastern rite of having a "crucial role" to "guarantee Christians the opportunity to live in their Country." But they call into question the responsibility of the native Christians, as well as those of Muslims. According to Mgr. Sako, the Middle Eastern Christians must avoid the "trap of nationalism" and always repropose all "forms of love lived and preached in the New Testament." While Muslims "have to update the application of the teaching of the Koran." The ideal reproposed by Mgr. Sako is that of "positive secularism" that "respects religion." A glance - eg surfaced in the Declaration on Religious Freedom promulgated by the Second Vatican Council - for which "human rights do not remain suspended in the air, separated from the concrete people who should be able to exercise them." (GV) (Agenzia Fides 23/01/2013)

> LINKS

The full text of the appeal, in Italian: http://www.fides.org/ita/documents/Quale_futuro_per_i_cristiani_in_Medio_Oriente.doc: