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ASIA/SYRIA - March of solidarity for the hostages in Mesopotamia

Hassake (Agenzia Fides) - A march of solidarity with the victims of kidnappings; a march to raise awareness towards the phenomenon of kidnapping; an "assembly of hope" that was attended by all members of society: Christians, Muslims, Kurds, associations and NGOs, churches leaders and leaders of mosques, public officials. As learned by Fides Agency, the initiative, which was held on Thursday, January 24 in Hassake, the capital of Mesopotamia, where the civilian population is completely worn out (see Fides 17/01/2013), shakes the area of eastern Syria. In the region a precarious balance between the opposing forces (including Islamist militias), the Kurdish forces, the Syrian army is lived, fighting each other.
The population pays the price that took to the streets - more than three thousand were present - with banners and slogans to demand "a future of peace and hope for Mesopotamia." The participants, who gave birth to the "Association of solidarity with the families of those kidnapped," marched from the headquarters of the Syrian Orthodox Church to the city's Palace of Justice, expressing their suffering and their demands. A memorandum was presented to the Public Prosecutor, asking him to carry out his tasks and asking the local government to provide protection to the innocent citizens.
"Kidnapping has become a daily phenomenon on the streets of this city. Kidnappers do not hesitate to commit crimes in broad daylight. About three weeks ago, three armed men with their faces uncovered, stopped a taxi and kidnapped a 10-year-old boy, Saeed Afram Aho, while he was going to school," explains to Fides, the Syrian Orthodox Archbishop Eustathius Matta Roham, Metropolitan of "Jazirah and Euphrates."
"About six months ago, the kidnappings began to multiply, due to the work of some gangs." Today, the victims are 43,they belong to all parts of society (Christians, Muslims, Yazidy, Kurds and Arabs),they are of different ages and walks of life: children, students, doctors, engineers, businessmen and ordinary people.
The Archbishop told Fides "the very difficult moments, the fear and pain of the families" also because the kidnappers, he notes, "use forms of torture towards innocent victims, in disregard of human, moral and religious virtues, in order to get a ransom." A child, Bashar, was left for two days without food and water in an underground cell, on a farm far from the city. "Today - he explains - many Christian families have fled, seeking safety in neighboring countries and in the West."
Mgr. Matta Roham took part in the march with the other two Bishops of the city, the Syrian Catholic Bishop Jacques Behnan Hindo and Bishop Mar Afrem Nathaniel, of the Assyrian Church. In this period of great crisis, the three Prelates meet regularly to discuss issues of social and religious interest. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 28/01/2013)

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