



## **ASIA/SYRIA - Gregory III appeals: "the sending of arms to Syria must be stopped":**

Damasco (Agenzia Fides)- "We appeal to the whole world to stop arms from being sent to Syria". This call was part of a statement sent to Fides by His Beatitude, Greek Catholic Melkite Patriarch Gregory III Laham following explosions in a district of Damascus yesterday.

The statement recalls that on February 21 three successive explosions in the Mazraa district of the Syrian capital left 53 persons dead, 235 wounded and serious material damage "particularly to a school and a hospital".

"We ask the international community and the most important countries in the world, to support Syrian efforts to promote dialogue, in order to reach a diplomatic solution to the crisis " says the Patriarch.

"From the depth of our heart we cry to the conscience of the entire world, to leaders of nations, especially of Arab countries, to international institutions, to peace militants, to His Holiness the Pope and to Bishops' Conferences throughout the world " the message continues. "We beg them to listen to our voice and to see the suffering of the Syrian people. No one has the right to exonerate himself or deny his responsibility in the face of these massacres, this destruction and these acts of violence, or in the face of hatred and rancour between sons of the same homeland ".

Gregory III Laham appeals lastly to the United States and to Russia to "continue sincere efforts to promote dialogue and reach a political and global solution " and finally urges "His Holiness, the Pope, and those in positions of responsibility at the Apostolic See of Rome, to launch a diplomatic initiative on behalf of the Catholic Church based on its world wide spiritual influence ". (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 25/2/2013)