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ASIA/IRAQ - New Shiite militant group threatens Sunnis and Christians

Baghdad (Agenzia Fides) - What everyone fears is a return to sectarian violence that has bloodied the country for years: families of a Sunni neighborhood in Baghdad in recent weeks have received warnings and threats from the Army of Mukhtar, a new Shiite Muslim militant group that is terrorizing the civilian population with slogans such as: "Go away or your agony will begin." According to observers, the group, that seem to have contacts with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, intends to rekindle sectarian tensions in the country that exploded in the aftermath of the arrival of American troops, then has slowly decreased since 2008, and wants to hit, in particular, Sunnis and other religious minorities. A similar wave of violence could easily undo the fragile progress that Iraq has made in recent years, at a political, economic and social level.
The Sunni minority in Iraq has repeatedly called for public demonstrations, claiming "discrimination by the government in power," while Sunni extremist groups have increased large-scale attacks against mainly Shiite targets. The Iraqi security forces, present in different districts of Baghdad, are trying to provide security to the civilian population, but many fear the emergence of a genuine sectarian conflict.
In this situation, Iraqi Christians continue to be the weak link in society: pressed in the conflict between Shiites and Sunnis, victims of terrorist groups who consider religious minorities "unwanted guests" in the country. Aware of the difficulties of the moment and the challenges ahead, Christian leaders, and in particular the new Chaldean Patriarch, His Exc. Mgr Louis Sako, ask all citizens to "give up personal, partisan, even religious and confessional interests " and appeal to political, social and religious community representatives "to work for the good of Iraq and the peace of the Iraqi people." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 27/02/2013)

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