



## **ASIA/LEBANON - A harsh warning by Patriarch Rai to Lebanese politicians: build your own Country, instead of getting involved in the Syrian conflict**

Bogota (Agenzia Fides) – At the end of the long tour among the Maronite communities in Latin America, the Patriarch of Antioch of the Maronites Bechara Boutros Rai addressed a severe reprimand to Lebanese politicians who fail to reach an agreement to prepare a new electoral law and lead the country out of the serious and dangerous political-institutional paralysis in which it has fallen. "I", said the Patriarch on Saturday, May 18 in the appeal relaunched in Bogota and sent to Fides Agency "consider Lebanese politicians accountable to history and national consciousness. If they fail to prepare an electoral law worthy of our country, it will only disappoint the people." According to Cardinal Rai "Lebanon needs new faces that can govern the country." The perpetuation of the political stalemate, the impasse on the electoral law and the inability to form a new government would confirm that the current Lebanese political class "is unworthy and incapable of assuming the leadership of the country." Strong words were expressed by the Maronite Patriarch also on the attitude of different Lebanese forces concerning the Syrian conflict: "The war in Syria," said Patriarch Rai "has divided the Lebanese into two factions, one siding with the opposition and the other with the government of Assad. But I say out loud that this is not our business, we should not interfere in the internal affairs of any Country. I say to the politicians and Lebanese officials: think about building your country which is in a terrible state, instead of taking part in the war in Syria. Stop playing with the destiny of our Country that has given so much to the world." The Maronite Patriarch especially deplored the plight of young Maronites who after studying at universities are forced to emigrate because of the insecurity that threatens the Lebanese society.

With regard to the specific topic of the electoral law, according to Patriarch Rai politicians should not pursue their own unique personal or sectarian gain, but what promotes the common good of the Nation. Above all, one cannot remain without a government in such a delicate historical moment and full of pitfalls. "I hope that this appeal enters in the hearts and minds of politicians in order to prepare an electoral law that gives dignity to the country and the Lebanese people. If not – concluded the Patriarch –leave your seats of government." (GV) (Agenzia Fides 20/05/2013).