



## **ASIA/IRAQ - Patriarch Sako: we need a "Chaldean League"**

Baghdad (Agenzia Fides) – Because of the difficult moment the Iraqi nation continues to live, we need to create a "Chaldean League": an association to coordinate and facilitate the contribution of the Chaldeans to civil society and to help Iraq overcome the excesses of denominational and ethnic sectarianism.

This is the urgency that the Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldeans, Louis Raphael I Sako expressed in a conversation with Fides Agency, outlining the objectives and characteristics of a project intended to take shape in the coming months.

"As a Chaldean", Patriarch Sako explains to Fides "we live in a time of confusion and uncertainty. Our presence in society is weak, fragmented in the field of politics, culture, social action. A 'Chaldean League' can help us give a more concrete and effective contribution to the civic life of our Country". The model is that of similar organizations born within other ecclesial communities of the East, such as the Maronite League and the Syriac League. An association that does not become direct instrument of Christian politicians - that militate in Iraq in opposing lists and often pursue special interests - but tries to move on a wider horizon. "The image I have" explains Patriarch Sako "is that of an elite group of lay people - professionals, intellectuals, experts, people who have roles in public life - that make the civilian and humanitarian contribution of the Chaldeans more effective and visible at the service of the whole society, to build bridges between Christians and with all Iraqis, not just at a religious and spiritual level, but also at a social and civil level". The proposal is also aimed at the Chaldean diaspora, and foreshadows an organization linked to the Chaldean community but without formal protections or direct economic support by the church hierarchy. "There are so many Christians", insists the Chaldean Patriarch "who are already working in many public institutions or in important areas such as health and education. But their contribution to the common good appears fragmented. The moment has come to create an organization that knows how to exploit their talents and their skills at the service of all".

The idea of establishing a Chaldean League publicly announced by Patriarch Sako in recent days, is collecting positive comments. The project is expected to take a more detailed form by the summer, likely after the celebration of the new Synod of the Chaldean Church. "The important thing" says Patriarch Sako "is to overcome the temptation of blind nationalism and fragmentation, which are undermining the Country: We must not imitate groups that are closed in themselves and fight each other. As Chaldeans, we want to work with all and be open to all". (GV) (Agenzia Fides 14/02/2014)