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ASIA/IRAQ – Iraq's Catholic Bishops insist: we must react to the violence destroying our nation

Baghdad (Agenzia Fides) – The dramatic situation which Iraq is experiencing has prompted the country's Catholic Bishops, yesterday in assembly, to urge the nation's Christians and all Iraqis to react against sectarian violence and clashes between political factions presently pushing the country back into chaos. The meeting, held in Baghdad in the morning of February 25 at the Chaldean Catholic Cathedral of St Joseph, issued a final statement addressed to all political groups and to representatives of government and institutions.
The appeal, a copy was sent to Fides, included urgent recommendations. All Christians were urged to pray during the coming season of Lent to obtain the gift of peace and security for the whole country. Political and social leaders were urged to engage in dialogue to discern prompt solutions to the national crisis and thus put an end to violence. The Bishops addressed also Iraqis who left the country because of instability and fighting, calling all emigrants to return to their homeland. The statement considered also the situation in Syria, once again demanding the release of two bishops and a group of women religious in Maalula abducted in the context of the Syrian conflict. The Bishops expressed deep gratitude for what Pope Francis is doing for the Church, for the world and for peace to be re-established in the many areas devastated by wars and violence, encouraging all Christians to remain in their native country to demonstrate their faith even in times of difficulty.
For the first time the assembly of the Iraqi Catholic Bishops was attended by Superiors of religious orders and religious congregations. The meeting elected a new secretary in the person of Bishop Shlemon Warduni, Auxiliary Bishop of Baghdad of the Chaldeans. He will be assisted by Archbishop Yousef Abba, Archbishop of Baghdad of Syrian Catholics. (GV) (Agenzia Fides 26/2/2014).

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