



ASIA/IRAQ - Elections among violence and attacks. Patriarch Sako: The policies of the West are due to the diaspora of Middle Eastern Christians

Baghdad (Agenzia Fides) - The attacks of terrorism that bloodied the weeks leading up to the elections in Iraq, currently being held today Wednesday, April 30, did not stop even in open seats, despite the strict security measures by the police apparatus. There is the prohibition of movement for all vehicles in Baghdad. In various parts of the Country, according to police sources cited by local agencies, violence in the attacks at the open seats seem to have caused already in the early hours of voting at least 10 victims and over 20 injured.

22 million voters are called to the polls. 9 lists comprising around 85 candidates compete for 5 seats (out of a total of 328) that the electoral system in force reserves for candidates of Christian faith. The five seats are distributed in the cities of Baghdad, Kirkuk, Nineveh, Arbil and Dahuk.

A few days before the election, the Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldeans, Louis Raphael I Sako launched a new urgent warning on the risk of the total disappearance of the indigenous Christian communities of Iraq. "A few days ago" says the Patriarch in the note sent to Fides Agency, "I visited the city of Hilla, where in the Nineties 287 Christian families lived. Currently there are 21 families. In Baghdad there are 21 opened Chaldean parishes, some others have been closed or merged. In the church of the Ascension in al-Mashtal, there were 5 thousand families and over 240 students preparing for their First Communion every year before the Regime's fall. On April 25, I celebrated in this church the Holy Mass for the Holy Communion of 13 students".

Among the causes that force the emigration of Christians from Iraq, the Patriarch lists wars, the deteriorating security conditions, the explosion of sectarian violence, seizure of property, unemployment, widespread feeling among Christians that their role in society is in decline. The root of the mass exodus that is emptying Iraq of Christians is ultimately found in the Middle East policies of the Western powers: "Democracy and Change" emphasizes Patriarch Sako comes through upbringing and education rather than through conflict. Intervention by the West in the region did not solve the problems of those countries, but on the contrary, produced more chaos and conflict. Honestly, 1,400 years of Islam could not uproot us from our land and our churches, while the policies of the West has scattered us and distributed us all around the world". (GV) (Agenzia Fides 30/04/2014)