



## **ASIA/IRAQ - Kirkuk defended by the Kurdish Peshmerga. In churches one prays: enough violence and pain**

Kirkuk (Agenzia Fides) - The villages around Kirkuk are already beyond the control of the Iraqi government, while in the urban area people are locked up in the house and the Kurdish Peshmerga militia have come from Kurdistan to protect the city by the jihadists of ISIL, the Sunni Islamist faction - already active in the Syrian conflict - who after having seizing Mosul is extending its control over large areas of the Iraqi territory.

This is the picture that emerges from the testimony of the Chaldean priest Qais Kage, contacted by Fides Agency. "The advance of the ISIL militiamen" explained Fr. Qais "is favored by large tribes and Sunnis clans. What happened in Mosul is significant: such a big city cannot fall in a few hours without support from within. The chaos and political division of the Country, due to sectarian conflicts, promotes the advance of the militants who have come from outside: the Iraqi army has left everything in their hands".

To protect Kirkuk, the Kurdish Peshmerga have arrived, on the request of the governor of the city, "Today", says Fr. Qais "Kurdish militias have made some maneuvers around the city, to deter possible attacks". Meanwhile, in the four Chaldean parishes, prayers are carried out every day: "we have suspended catechism and activities with young people for safety reasons", says Fr. Qais to Fides "but the churches are open. In this month dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we celebrate Mass every day and pray asking the Lord to save us from new outbreaks of sectarian violence". (GV) (Agenzia Fides 11/06/2014)