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ASIA/IRAQ - Archbishop Nona: Muslims defend a church from depredations in Mosul

Mosul (Agenzia Fides) - "Now in Mosul jihadist militants control the city and the situation is calm. But we do not know who they are and what they want to do now". His Excellency Amel Shamon Nona, Chaldean Archbishop of Mosul, describes to Fides Agency the climate that now reigns in Iraq's second largest city, which was captured two days ago by the rebels of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Jihadist faction also active in the Syrian conflict. The Chaldean Archbishop confirms that the vast majority of the 1,200 Christian families have left the city. He himself and his priests have found shelter in villages in the Nineveh Plain such as Kramles and Tilkif, a few tens of kilometers from Mosul. At the same time, His Excellency Ninth denies rumors of attacks on churches operated by men of the ISIL. "Our church dedicated to the Holy Spirit", the Archbishop refers to Fides, "was depradated by gangs of robbers yesterday and the day before yesterday, while the city was captured by the ISIL. But Muslim families living in the surrounding area have called their Islamist militants, who intervened, putting an end to the looting. The same Muslim families phoned us to let us know that they themselves are controlling the church, and will not allow the jackals to return".
The construction site of an Armenian church still under construction was involved in the clashes and damaged just because it was next to an army base attacked by jihadists. After their entry in the city, Islamist militias manifest the intention to maintain public order under strict control. Archbishop Nona does not confirm the rumors about the alleged imposition of the Islamic veil on Christian women made by the jihadists and points out that Christians in Mosul, locked up in their own homes, are mostly elderly unable to escape because of their age and health conditions. He also points out that, among the hundreds of thousands of residents who fled Mosul, the vast majority are Muslims.
Mgr. Nona's doubts regard the pliancy shown by the Iraqi army and police forces before the arrival of the Islamists: "What I can say", said the Archbishop, "is that what has happened is a mystery. It is not known how soldiers and police managed to leave the city in less than an hour, leaving weapons and means of transport. All this raises many questions".
The Chaldean church in Mosul dedicated to the Holy Spirit is where Father Ragheed Ganni was killed along with three deacons on June 3, 2007 and where Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho, was abducted, whose lifeless body was found on March 13, 2008. (GV) (Agenzia Fides 12/06/2014)

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