



ASIA/IRAQ - Iraqi Bishops appeal to the Prime Minister and the government: "stop the catastrophe"

Erbil (Agenzia Fides) - The Iraqi national government must ensure "necessary protection" for Christians and other minorities in the Country, provide "financial support to displaced people who have lost everything", pay the wages of state employees "immediately", compensate those who have suffered material losses and ensure continuity in the provision of housing and social services and education for families who may have to spend a long time away from their homes. This is the urgent appeal that Chaldean Patriarch Louis Raphael I Sako and all the Chaldean, Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic and Armenian Bishops in northern Iraq launched at the end of their meeting on Tuesday 22 July held in Ankawa (suburb of Erbil) and dedicated to the serious events recorded in the region in recent weeks, starting with the expulsion of Christians and Shiites from the city of Mosul decreed by the militiamen of the self-proclaimed Islamic Caliphate.

The appeal, sent to Fides Agency, is addressed primarily to the Prime Minister and the national government, with an implicit admission of their inaction. At the same time, the Iraqi Bishops invite "people of conscience in Iraq and around the world" to put pressure on militants to put a stop to "the destruction of churches and monasteries, manuscripts, relics and all the Christian heritage, priceless Iraqi and international heritage. What was said with regards to an agreement between the militants and the clergy is false", continues the appeal, reiterating that "a crime is a crime, and it cannot be denied or justified. We expect concrete actions to assure our people, not just press releases of denunciation and condemnation".

In this respect, the Bishops express an eloquent appreciation for the role played by the autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan, appreciating its readiness to "accommodate the displaced families, to embrace them and to help them. We - add the Leaders of Churches in northern Iraq - propose the creation of a joint committee between the regional government and the representatives of our people in order to fulfill the suffering of refugee families and improve their conditions. "The appeal ends with a supplication to the Almighty God so that catastrophe is stopped and "security, peace and stability is re-established throughout Iraq". (GV) Agenzia Fides 23/07/2014)