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بطريرك بابل للكلدان
فطريركا دبيل دكلديا
Patriarcha Babylonensis Chaldaeorum

TO THE CONSCIENCE OF THE WORLD

IRAQ'S CHRISTIANS, A DOUBLE CATASTROPHE

It has become obvious that Iraqi Christians along with other minorities have received a fatal blow at the core of their lives and their existence whether through displacing more than a hundred thousand Christians by force, or looting their possessions, money, and documents, or occupying their houses *for just being Christian!* I visited the camps of the displaced persons in the provinces of Erbil and Dohok and what I saw and what I heard is beyond any imagination!

Since the 6th August until now there is not yet an immediate concrete solution for the crisis we are facing. On the other hand the flow of funds, arms and fighters continues to the Islamic State. Despite the fact that we are living an organized campaign of elimination from Iraq, the world conscience is not fully awake to gravity of the situation. Now, the second phase of the calamity has already began, which is the migration of these families to the different parts of the world, thus dissolving the history, heritage, and identity of these people into void.

Displacement and migration have their great impact on us, both on Christians and Muslims. Iraq is losing an irreplaceable component of its society, the Christian one; hence begins the vanishing of a genuine tradition!

The international community, principally the United States and European Union due to their moral and historic responsibility towards Iraq, cannot be indifferent. While acknowledging all that is being done to solve this crisis, it seems that the decisions and actions undertaken until now have made no real change in the course of events and the fate of the these affected people is still at stake, as if these people are not part of the human race!

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The same is true with regard to the Muslim community, whose statements about the barbaric acts in the name of their religion practiced against the life, dignity and freedom of Christians were not according to our expectation, knowing that Christians have contributed and fought for this country, living in partnership with their Muslim brothers alongside the Islamic civilization.

Religious fundamentalism is still growing in its power and force, creating tragedies, and making us wonder when the Islamic religious scholars and the Muslim intellectuals will critically examine this dangerous phenomenon and eradicate it by educating a true religious consciousness and spreading a genuine culture of accepting the other as brother and as an equal citizen with full rights.

What has happened is terrible and horrific, therefore, we need an urgent and effective international support from all the people of good will to save the Christians and Yezidis, genuine components of the Iraqi society from extinction, knowing that silence and passivity will encourage ISIS fundamentalists to commit more tragedies! *The question is who will be the next*

Many of these displaced persons wish to return to their towns and houses in the Nineveh Plain, and hope to see it safe under international protection. But the full safety of this zone cannot be achieved without the cooperation of the International Community along with the joint action of the Central Government and the Regional Government of Kurdistan. These innocent people deserve to live in peace and dignity after the terror afflicted on them by the ISIS and after being looted by their own neighbors.

The Church: Certainly we are proud of the faith of our sons and daughters and their steadfastness and courage in the face of this calamity for the sake of their belief. We invite them to live this crisis in a real communion with all the people around them without any distinction. What we need is not exhausting statements but real communion with others which we experienced during the visit of the delegation of French bishop's conference, Personal Envoy of Pope Francis and Patriarchs. This crisis is empowering us for a spiritual, moral and material reconstruction of our communities. We do respect the decision of those who wish to migrate, but for those who wish to remain, we underline our long history and deeply rooted heritage in this land. God has his own plan for our presence in this land and invites us to carry the message of love, brotherhood, dignity, and harmonious co-existence.

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