



## „Deep Concern and Great Sorrow“

### Letter to the Bishops and the Christians in Iraq

His Eminence, Patriarch Louis Raphael I. Sako, Bagdad

His Eminence, Archbishop Bashar Warda, Erbil

His Eminence, Archbishop Emil Shimoun Nona, Mosul  
Chaldean Church

His Eminence, Archbishop Mar Gewargis Silwa, Bagdad  
Assyrian Apostolic Church of the East

His Eminence, Archbishop Awak Asadourian, Bagdad  
Armenian-Apostolic Church

His Eminence, Bishop Nikodemus David Sharaf, Mosul  
Syrian-Orthodox Church

His Eminence, Bishop Petros Moshi, Mosul  
Syriac Catholic Church

and to all Faithful Assyrian, Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Christians in Iraq



Your Eminence,

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

with deep concern and great sorrow we heard about the displacement of Christians from Mosul and surrounding areas. The incredible cruelty and violence of the so called “Islamic State” has caused pain and distress to so many people in Iraq and Syria. As Bishop of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Bavaria and member of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) I want to express my solidarity and encouragement for you and the Christian community in difficult times.

Actually we feel that it is our duty to stand aside with our Christian sisters and brothers in Iraq. Therefore we encourage our parishes to pray for peace in Iraq, we give through our media latest news from North Iraq to the public und – through our roof organisation EKD – we contacted the German government asking for support to Iraqi Christian and all victims of IS.

As Lutherans in South Germany we have a long Ecumenical friendship with you Christians in Iraq. Contacts started in 1997 with solidarity visits and some projects of church reconstruction. We have developed the Ecumenical cooperation throughout the years with manifold contacts, implementing an education program for the parishes of all local churches, rebuilding schools and kindergartens or sometimes even churches. In times of persecution now we want to support local Christian initiatives in their attempt to organize relief for the refugees. Therefore we have asked the Lutheran World Service to prepare a comprehensive relief program. The so called “ActAppeal” was now sent to all member churches of the World Council of Churches with request to provide financial support. My Church will contribute a substantial part of whole budget. We give on this occasion special thanks to CAPNI from Dohuk providing professional support and logistic help.

A few days ago I was taking part in a Christian program for children in Munich. I was telling the children the Biblical story of Jona, the prophet. This is a very popular story in the tradition of our church and it is very often told in Christian education. In these days of pain and fear in Iraq the story has an even deeper message. Jona has to condemn Ninive in the name of God, but refuses to do so. We see a prophet hesitating to fulfil God’s judgement. In Ninive nowadays we see self-appointed executors dead keen on using the sword in the name of God. It is quite symbolic that Jona’s tomb was now destroyed in Mosul/Ninive: this prophet is a counterpart to nowadays Djihadism. As we know, Ninve was finally spared and had the opportunity to do penitence, according to the Bible. This is our message on God’s Grace – HE wants us to live and to come back to him, he does not want us to be killed or to execute violence in his name.

We do pray for the peaceful future of the Iraqi people and the end of persecution for Christians and other minorities. In near future I would like to show my solidarity personally and to visit the Christian Communities in Iraq. I hope to see you there and to meet you personally!

May the blessing of God be with you!

Yours in Christ

Rt. Rev. Prof. Dr. Bedford-Strohm, Head Bishop

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