

A Fact Finding Visit to the Displaced Christians in Iraq

A team from Iraqi Al-Amal Association and Etana Women's Assembly toured the areas in Nineveh and Mosul Planes to investigate the conditions of the displaced Christian families from Mosul City, following the last criminal sectarian attacks carried out against them during the last couple of days. The visit took place on 12th and 13th October 2008.

The tour included both the districts of Karakoush and Tilkeif and villages of these two districts; Burtelah, Karemlees, Alqoush, Al-Sharafia, Telsqof, Baqoufa, Batnaia, Baasheeqa, and Saint Matti monastery. Many bereaved families were interviewed. The majority were employees of the governmental and professionals, such as university professors, teachers and engineers.

Some of these families received direct death threats. Others fled in fear with only the clothes they were wearing after hearing news about the murder of 12 Christian citizens in different areas of the Mosul City, and the bombing of three houses in AL Sukkar district. They could not even take their medicines with them. Threatening leaflets were distributed along with CD's, death threat letters, messages via cell phones, marking houses, hanging placards with threats and warnings through loud speakers in many quarters ordering Christians to leave at once or face revenge. 1200 families were displaced and the number is increasing.

The delegation met with Mosul City Council member, Ms. Evelyn Enwiya, a number of representatives from the local councils, the Iraqi Red Crescent, clergymen, and dignitaries from the affected areas. Opinions were exchanged in regards to the current situations in Mosul City. There were also discussions on how to provide protection and emergency aid for the displaced.

The delegation sensed the feelings of solidarity and unanimity amongst the locals, expressed through taking the displaced into their own homes and helping in raising donations for them. The churches, monasteries and the houses of priests were filled with hundreds of families as a temporary solution. Schools received the displaced students as guest students. Health care centres dispatched medical groups to the areas in order to offer any medical help required.

The displaced people expressed extremely touching images of solidarity, brotherhood, and love between them and their neighbours, of different religions and ethnic backgrounds, in Mosul City, who helped them during their present ordeal by transporting them to safer havens and guarding their properties.

Many of the displaced confirmed that the deterioration of the situation, the symptoms of which surfaced during the last two weeks, was due to the weakness and laxity of The Security Preservation Forces led by the Federal Government in dealing with the nests of crime and terrorism in the city. The displaced people pointed out with deep concern the fact that there were penetrations within these security forces, and that they were often used as

covers for criminal actions. They also expressed their resentment towards these forces for withdrawing, during an earlier campaign, personal arms from the locals, without providing any protection for the city, which led to the spread of theft, and provided convenient grounds for extremists to carry out their crimes.

They believe that this campaign against Christians is a continuation of the criminal acts preceding it against the Azdians and Shabaks. It is an organised operation supported by local, regional and international parties, which is part of a plan designed for the demographical redistribution and the division of Iraq. The weakness in the national will and the absence of trust amongst the ruling political parties, who are competing for power and wealth on the expense of urgent needs of the people, provide the right environment for these actions.

The delegation concluded its visit to the area, with an emotional meeting, in which they listened to the cries for help from Ms. Basima Arminak, a widow, whose house was blown up by terrorists. She pleaded to those in position of responsibility to act without delay, in order to protect her and her family: 'Where am I to go? My house was flattened to the ground; I've been struggling for thirty years for this house, to secure a roof for me and my five children. It took one criminal act to bring it down tumbling. It brings back all the pains of the past endured by our ancestors.'

The delegation left the area, bearing in memory a written phrase on the walls of one of the monasteries;

'Oh Lord of peace, bestow peace upon Iraq '

14th October 2008





