



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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October 16, 2008

Stephen J. Hadley
National Security Advisor
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Hadley,

Reports of escalating violence in Mosul fail to capture the depth of suffering felt by the people of Iraq as they struggle to survive in a country torn by conflict. As Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I am greatly troubled by the continued lack of security and stability in Iraq which has led to the migration and internal displacement of over four million Iraqis. Our Conference is deeply concerned for all Iraqis who have fled their homes, but as you know a disproportionate number of them are Christians whose lives, livelihoods and homes were threatened or destroyed. Ironically many of those Christians not fleeing abroad moved to the area around Mosul for safety and security.

Given this context, the recent murders of a dozen Christians in Mosul are particularly ominous. On October 12, Pope Benedict XVI prayed “for reconciliation and peace in certain situations provoking alarm and great suffering” such as “the violence against Christians in Iraq.” In speaking to a Synod of Bishops in Rome on October 14, Cardinal Emmanuel Delly, Patriarch of the Chaldean Church in Iraq, said, “Peace and security are lacking, just as the basic elements for daily life are lacking.” He mourned the death of the Archbishop of Mosul, Faraj Rahho, three other priests and six lay persons and deplored the climate of intimidation and fear which pervades. He noted two other bishops and 16 priests had been kidnapped but later released after high ransoms were paid.

The Christian community is not alone in experiencing suffering in Iraq, but more must be done to help them. This terrible situation in Mosul has prompted the Organization of the Islamic Conference to condemn the violence against Iraqi Christians, calling it “unprecedented in the history of the country.”

We ask that the United States government work with the Iraqi government to restore law and order and to foster a climate in which the human rights of all minorities, including Christians, are respected.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman, Committee on International Justice
and Peace