



Terrorists Sack and Occupy a Convent in Baghdad

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Baghdad (AsiaNews) -- Terrorists, believed to be Shiites, yesterday occupied the Convent belonging to the Chaldean Sisters of the Scared Heart in Baghdad. Sources in the capital in contact with the nuns denounced the event to AsiaNews. The Angel Raphael convent lies in the Mikanik area of the oppressed Dora quarter where for months now a ferocious anti Christian campaign of persecution has been unfolding. The only two sisters who still lived in there tell that a group of terrorists broke into the building during their absence; on their return they found the convent had been sacked of all its goods and turned into a base for military operations.

According to anonymous sources, in all probability, Shiite militants are behind the attack; as they too join Sunnis in their anti-Christian campaign. Two days ago a letter signed by the Mahdi Army, linked to the radical leader al Sadr, which imposes the Islamic veil on Christian women in Baghdad. Today a spokesperson for the group in Najaf, denied all involvement with the message, yet according to priests on the round, the situation is "very worrying".

Sources maintain that the attack on the convent, "could be in response to the Chaldean, Patriarch Emmanuel III Delly's condemnation of the attack on the Sunni Abdul Qader Al Dilani mosque", which took place on May 28th in the capital. The leader of the Chaldean Church in fact joined the Council of Christian Churches in Iraq in denouncing the episode as an attack against "all Iraq and all Iraqis without exceptions, capable of undermining national unity and fomenting division and discord".

Security in places of worship and for the Christian community will be at the centre of the Chaldean Churches Synod, which opens its first session today in the northern city of al Qosh. Tomorrow the Vatican Nuncio, Msgr. Francis Chullikat, is expected in Erbil, in Kurdistan.

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