

## Dominican Justice Promoters Call for Immediate Protection of Iraq's Christian Minority

Members of a U.S. Dominican social justice committee that focuses on Iraq have asked the Catholic Bishops to use their influence in Washington to insist on protection for Iraqi Christians. Over the past two weeks violence against Christians in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul has increased. Many presume it is an attempt to keep the Christians from voting in national elections scheduled for March 7.

Last week assassins entered the home of a Christian family, killing an elderly father and his two sons. Panicked by the realization that they are no longer safe in their own homes, more than 100 families fled Mosul in the hours following the incident.

Writing to Cardinal Francis George, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the U.S. Dominican Iraq Coordinating Committee quotes the top Vatican official in Iraq, Archbishop Francis Assisi Chullikatt, who called for urgent help, saying it is especially necessary "that the pressure of world opinion not fall, so that all the violence and discrimination [against Iraq's Christians] ends immediately."

Signatories to the letter include three Michigan residents: In Adrian, Sister Durstyne Farnan, OP, co-promoter of Justice and Peace for the Order of Preachers in North America and Father James Barnett, OP, an itinerant preacher who resides at the Friends of God Dominican Ashram; and in Detroit, Sister Beth Murphy, OP, who is the community outreach coordinator for the Office of Refugee Resettlement in the Archdiocese of Detroit.

The Dominicans have requested that the bishops "Urge our administration, and through it the Iraqi government, to secure rights and protection for the long suffering people of Iraq."

In addition to the letter to the U.S. Bishops, members of the committee have issued an action alert to the ten thousand members of the Dominican Order in the United States, calling on them to fast, pray, and advocate with U.S. officials for protection of Iraq's minority populations. Those to be contacted include Michigan Senator Carl Levin and Michael Corbin, head of the Near East Area at the U.S. Department of State.

The letter to the U.S. Bishops and the Action Alert are attached.

The U.S. Dominicans are members of an 800-year-old international religious tradition founded by St. Dominic Guzman and known formally as the Order of Preachers. There are about 10,000 Dominicans in the U.S., belonging to every branch of the order: contemplative nuns, priest and brothers, apostolic women religious, laity, and associates.