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## **Press Release of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development: Meeting on the Syrian and Iraqi humanitarian crisis (10 December 2020)**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **MEETING ON THE SYRIAN AND IRAQI HUMANITARIAN CRISIS (10 December 2020)**

On Thursday 10 December the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development promotes a meeting on the Syrian and Iraqi humanitarian crisis. The meeting, to which about fifty Catholic NGOs, representatives of local episcopates and ecclesial institutions and religious congregations operating in Syria, Iraq and neighbouring countries, as well as the Apostolic Nuncios of the area, have given their support, will be held online (via Zoom) starting at 4.00 p.m.

The opening of the meeting, with the moderation of the Undersecretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Msgr. Segundo Tejado Muñoz, and Mrs. Moira Monacelli, of Caritas Internationalis, will see the opening prayer of Msgr. Bruno Marie Duffé, Secretary of the Dicastery, and then the introductory speech of His Eminence Card. Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State. This will be followed by a session dedicated to the political-diplomatic situation, with a speech by H.E. Mgr. Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States, and His Eminence Card. Mario Zenari, Apostolic Nuncio to Syria, moderated by Msgr. Ionu Paul Strejac, of the Secretariat of State. There will then follow a session on the role of the Church in Syria and Iraq, moderated by Msgr. Kuriakose Cherupuzhathottathil, of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, in which His Eminence Card. Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation itself; a session, which will explore the theme of migrants and internally displaced persons, which will see the speeches of Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and Mrs. Pascale Debbane, Official of the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, moderated by the Undersecretary of the Migrants and Refugees Section, Fr. Fabio Baggio, C.S.; a session on Catholic NGOs and their work in the transition from the emergency phase to the integral development one, in which His Eminence Card. Peter K.A. Turkson, Prefect of the Dicastery, and Mr. Aloysius John, Secretary General of Caritas Internationalis. Each session will include a part dedicated to discussion with all participants.

A video message from the Holy Father will be broadcast at the beginning of the meeting.

The meeting takes on particular relevance in this time of pandemic and crisis, which sees interconnected health, economic, social and political issues. The aim of the meeting, in continuity with the path undertaken in recent years, is to offer itself as a moment of reflection, fraternal communion and coordination between all the ecclesial institutions involved in works of charity and assistance for the populations affected throughout the Middle East by this humanitarian crisis, to which the Holy Father has repeatedly drawn the attention of public opinion; take stock of the work done so far by Catholic charitable organisations in the context of the crisis in Lebanon and the COVID-19 pandemic, sharing information on the present situation and the Church's responses; discuss the critical issues that have emerged and identify priorities for the future; analyse the situation of the Christian communities living in the countries affected by the war, promoting synergy between Church organisations and the local Church. A special reflection this year will be on the theme of integral development, as well as realistic prospects for the voluntary return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their communities of origin.

The conflict in Syria and Iraq has produced one of the most serious humanitarian crises in recent decades. In addition to diplomatic activity, the Holy See is actively involved in humanitarian aid and assistance programmes. Since 2014, the Church's network has allocated more than 1 billion dollars to the emergency response, reaching more than 4 million individual beneficiaries per year. According to UN sources, there are currently still 11 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria, while more than 6 million are internally displaced persons (IDPs); in Iraq, the figures are over 4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and over 1 million IDPs respectively. It should be noted, however, that all the countries in the area are affected by the serious humanitarian crisis, particularly Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan.

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