



## HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL 22<sup>nd</sup> Special session

**"The human rights situation in Iraq in light of abuses committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and associated groups" □ Geneva, 1 September 2014**

**Joint Oral Statement submitted by Caritas Internationalis (International Confederation of Catholic Charities) and co-signed by the Company of the Daughters of Charity of Vincent de Paul, the Congregation of our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Dominicans for Justice and Peace (order of Preachers), International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE), International Institute of Mary Our Help of the Salesians of Don Bosco (IIMA), International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education, Development (VIDES), Pax Romana**

Mr. President,

Caritas Internationalis and several other co-signers know first-hand and are engaged in direct humanitarian responses to those Iraqi people who recently have been subjected to inhuman crimes on a systematic and continuous basis. They have been robbed of every last possession and now have no means to buy food, to find shelter or attend to their basic needs, and are deprived of their human dignity. The numbers, particularly elderly people and children, that have lost their lives, or have been brutally maimed and raped defies the understanding of civilized people in all parts of the world.

Since the enactment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, great advances have been made in recognising the rights of minorities within the international community, particularly through the good offices of the High Commissioner, the Council, and the mandate holders. The atrocities in Iraq, however, concern these very same groups: Christians, Yazidis, Kurds, Shabaks, Madaeans, Turkmens and others. When will our global human family begin to learn from history? As Pope Francis said: "Violence is never defeated by violence. Violence is conquered by peace."

How can members of the same human family inflict such atrocities on their own people in the name of religion? We are deeply concerned, therefore, that this most recent surge of violence may result in a weakening of Christian – Muslim dialogue and place obstacles to the peaceful coexistence desired by a majority of Muslims and Christians, not only in the Middle East, but also in all parts of the world.

Therefore we call upon the militants of the Islamic State to cease inflicting atrocities on their brothers and sisters and to work towards building peaceful societies, where all human persons, whether in minority or majority communities, can flourish and live together in peace.

Moreover, we urge the international community:

- to take immediate action to protect vulnerable populations, especially minority groups, from war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other gross and systematic human rights violations, to respect the right to life for each and every human person, and to promote a peaceful solution to the current crisis;
- to take all necessary measures to ensure that humanitarian actors have safe and unimpeded access to civilians, especially to those most in need;
- to express its solidarity by assisting Iraq and its neighbouring countries to cope with the massive flux of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Finally, we call on the Human Rights Council:

- to urgently re-establish the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iraq that was terminated in 2004
- to direct the mandate holder to conduct, without any delay, an assessment mission and to collaborate with other relevant mandate holders, including the Special Rapporteur on Minorities, the Iraqi authorities, and all other relevant stakeholders in the international community, in the development of effective strategies and actions to guarantee the human rights of the most vulnerable;
- and thus to bring about an immediate end to this human tragedy.