

# We welcome Pope Francis visit to Iraq

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Today March 5, Supreme head of Catholic world His Holiness Pope Francis is visiting Iraq for the first time as a sign of hope, peace, brotherhood and courage. Pope Francis decision to visit Iraq and meeting various communities, leaders and people will surely creat new force in Iraq and especially for beleaguered Christian communities across the country.

Amid Covid 19, political, social and economic hardship and turmoil, ongoing presence of insurgent groups and battleground of neighboring states, Iraq is witnessing a deadlock over many domains and the visit of Pope Francis arrives at a decisive moment for all Iraqis and most importantly for Iraqi Christians which faced genocide, mass exodus, killings and destruction.

Following the ISIS invasion of Nineveh Plain and adjacent territories, Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian people forced to exile, leaving their towns, villages, churches and monasteries. While the Christian population was 1 half million prior to the 2003, following incessant attacks and violence today Christians are approximately 350.000 in the country. With the support of Catholic and other humanitarian organizations Christians continue to go back to their ancestral lands.

Pope Francis visit is occasion for Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian Christians and other groups to highlight and prioritize their demands of self governance and security demands as the long term solutions to create their safe place in the country. In this regard, we extent our gratitude to His Holiness Pope Francis for his courage to visit Iraq and we believe that this will create enormous momentum for all Iraqis.