

Iraqi archbishop appealed for help in letter

WASHINGTON - The kidnapped archbishop of Mosul, Iraq, recently found dead there, had asked for prayers for Iraqi Chaldean Catholics and said he would be the last person to leave Mosul.

“We are asking for your prayers to remove this cloud from our country and our church,” said Chaldean Catholic Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho of Mosul, in a Jan. 18 letter to the New York-based Catholic Near East Welfare Association. The letter, which the association sent to Catholic News Service March 17, referred to a series of church bombings in Mosul in early January.

“We want to stay in our beloved land, despite the situation and the sufferings, especially after these last bombings,” said Archbishop Rahho.

The archbishop asked for support from the association and said that “as a result of immigration, violence, kidnappings, bombings and unemployment” the church’s revenue had declined by more than 25 percent.

However, Archbishop Rahho said the church provided “nonstop pastoral services for Chaldean families forced from Baghdad and other insecure areas” who had settled in villages in northern Iraq.

“We do not want to close our churches or leave Mosul,” Archbishop Rahho said.

He added, “Personally, I will be the last person to leave.”

Archbishop Rahho, 65, was kidnapped Feb. 29 in an attack that left his driver and

two bodyguards dead. The archbishop's body was recovered March 13 after the kidnappers told Catholic leaders in Iraq where he had been buried. His funeral was March 14.

The Catholic Near East Welfare Association provides humanitarian support to the people of the Middle East and supports the endeavors of Eastern Catholics such as the Chaldeans.