

# **U.S. must ‘redouble its efforts’ to protect Iraqis, cardinal tells Obama**

WASHINGTON – The president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops urged the U.S. government to “redouble its efforts to assist Iraqis” in providing safety for its citizens, especially religious minorities.

“To meet its moral obligations to the Iraqi people, it is critically important that the United States take additional steps now to help Iraq protect its citizens, especially Christians and others who are victims of organized attacks,” said Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago in a Nov. 9 letter to U.S. President Barack Obama.

Reminding Obama that the U.S. bishops had expressed “grave moral questions” before the U.S.-led combat began in Iraq and had warned of the “unpredictable consequences” of that action, Cardinal George said, “The decimation of the Christian community in Iraq and the continuing violence that threatens all Iraqis are among those tragic consequences.”

The cardinal sent the letter following the Oct. 31 attack on the Syrian Catholic cathedral in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad that killed 58 people and wounded 75.

The attack, along with recent bombings in Baghdad, “are grim evidence of the savage violence and lack of security that has plagued the Iraqi people, especially Christians and other minorities, for over seven years,” he said.

Although the U.S. bishops welcome the end of U.S. combat in Iraq, Cardinal George said, the United States “has so far failed in helping Iraqis to develop the political will needed to deploy effective strategies to protect the lives of all citizens.”

“Having invaded Iraq, our nation has a moral obligation not to abandon those Iraqis who cannot defend themselves,” he added.

The cardinal outlined a series of steps that, “at a minimum,” the United States and the international community must help Iraq to achieve:

- “Enable the Iraqi government to function for the common good of all Iraqis.
- “Build the capacity of Iraq’s military and police to provide security for all citizens, including minorities.
- “Improve the judicial system and rule of law.
- “Promote reconciliation and the protection of human rights, especially religious freedom.
- “Rebuild Iraq’s shattered economy so that Iraqis can support their families.
- “Assist refugees and internally displaced Iraqis.”