



Diocese of Broken Bay

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The persecution of religious minorities in Iraq. A response

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The reports from Iraq of the raging violence against defenseless populations and religious minorities are deeply disturbing. How can we respond? Three constructive suggestions follow.

- **Pray**
 - Join with Pope Francis and all the Bishops in crying out to God, and to each other, that cycles of violence will give way to a lasting peace. See prayers below.

- **Give material aid.** For example:
 - Contribute to the works of [Caritas Iraq](#). Caritas Iraq is working with *Caritas Internationalis* organisations to reach thousands of people in need. More than one million people have fled their homes in northern and central Iraq. Many of those who have fled are Christians, Yazidis and Shia Muslims.
<http://www.caritas.org/2014/08/caritas-relief-reaches-families-in-iraq/>

- **Speak and act with care**

Here in Australia, be aware of the pressure Muslim communities are under at this time. Take care in conversation to distinguish between extremists and authentic, peaceful expressions of Islam. Within your sphere of influence do what you can to defuse prejudicial tendencies and facilitate interfaith harmony.

Become better educated in Catholic-Muslim relations. E.g., Tap into the resources of the Columban Mission Institute's Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations at columban.org.au

Support community organisations which promote positive interfaith and intercultural relations. Two examples that are active collaborators with our Diocese of Broken Bay:

Affinity Intercultural Foundation: www.affinity.org.au
Together for Humanity: www.togetherforhumanity.org.au

Prayer for peace

As Christians who enjoy relative peace and security in Australia, let us be mindful of the desperation of Christians, Yazidis and other persecuted religious minorities in Iraq. In prayerful solidarity we join with:

The Chaldean Catholic Patriarch of Iraq who has personally composed this Prayer for Peace:

Lord, the plight of our country is deep and the suffering of Christians is severe and frightening. Therefore, we ask you Lord to spare our lives, and to grant us patience, and courage to continue our witness of Christian values with trust and hope. Lord, peace is the

foundation of life; Grant us the peace and stability that will enable us to live with each other without fear and anxiety, and with dignity and joy. Glory be to you forever.

Pope Francis, who cried out with pain:

“Our brothers and sisters are persecuted, they are pushed out, forced to leave their homes... To these families and to these people I would like to express my closeness and my steadfast prayer. Dearest brothers and sisters so persecuted, I know how much you suffer, I know that you are deprived of everything. I am with you in your faith in Him who conquered evil!”

“May the God of peace create in all an authentic desire for dialogue and reconciliation. Violence is not conquered with violence. Violence is conquered with peace! Let us pray in silence, asking for peace; everyone, in silence... Mary Queen of peace, pray for us!” (Angelus, 20 July 2014).

The Australian Catholic Bishops:

“We offer our constant prayers for the innocent victims of the current conflicts and for an end to the continuing loss of life.” (Media statement, 5 Aug 2014)