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## AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

### **Statement of Solidarity with the Christian people of Iraq**

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference feels keenly the suffering of the Christians of Iraq in recent times, and wishes to express solidarity with them.

Christian communities that have flourished in the region since the time of the apostles now face great persecution.

Archbishop Emil Shimoun Nona, Chaldean archbishop of Mosul, has described the suffering of Iraqi Christians as “an endless way of the cross”.

Recent events including the hostage-taking and murder of worshippers in the Syriac Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of Salvation in Baghdad have caused deep sorrow.

This atrocity has been followed by coordinated attacks and bombings across the country against Christians.

Iraqis have fled these attacks which have terrorized Christians and non-Christians alike, at a time when they seek only to live together in peace, free from persecution.

The tragedy of so many Christians being driven from their land will break down an element of pluralism leaving the nation more deeply polarized as it struggles to rebuild. Those who remain face dispossession and poverty. Given Australia’s involvement in Iraq, we have asked the Australian Government to do all in its power to address the sufferings of Christians and other minorities in Iraq, and to assist those who have been driven into nearby lands such as Syria.

We join in sorrow with all Iraqi people who live in Australia who mourn the deaths of loved ones.

We ask the intercession of Our Lady of Salvation to bring peace and justice to this afflicted nation and eternal rest for those who have died.