Iraq urged to quell anti-Christian violence: WCC and NCC leaders express concern

News in the issue

In the wake of recent deadly violence against Christians in northern Iraq, the top executive of the National Council of Churches has welcomed the urgent call by Samuel Kobia, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, for the UN and the Iraqi government to denounce expulsion threats against the country's Christian minority.

Michael Kinnamon, general secretary of the New York–based NCC, said on October 20 that "Americans have a special responsibility to provide a safe and secure environment for Christians and all Iraqi civilians."

While not underestimating the task for coalition commanders, Kinnamon said that attacks on Christians in the city of Mosul must not be allowed to continue. In the first few weeks after September 28, attacks have killed at least 14 people and caused about 1,500 Christian families to flee their homes.

Churches and church property also have been destroyed in attacks generally blamed on al-Qaeda terrorists, according to news reports. In writing to Kinnamon, Kobia expressed his appreciation for "the firm and courageous stance taken by the U.S. churches to protest the war in Iraq, from its inception until now."

Kobia also noted the failure of coalition forces in Iraq to fulfill their responsibility under the Fourth Geneva Convention to maintain the safety of civilians, including Christians, "during the occupation of their country."