

IRAQ

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archbishop told them that Iraqi Christians were still very much in shock from the rapid pace of change and were concerned about the make-up of the new government.

"They are concerned that there be a place at the table for different religions and tribal affiliations in the government, but everything is just beginning to unfold, so I think all minorities will be concerned at this point until they see how things develop," she said.

Father Nizar Semaan, a Syrian-rite priest working in northern Iraq, told the Vatican missionary news agency Fides that many Iraqi Christians were worried about a surge in Islamic fundamentalism in the country.

"While international media describe Shiite gatherings in Karbala as manifestations of victory, democracy and freedom, we, as Iraqi Christians, are very concerned about the future of our country," Father Semaan said.

He said Christians are apprehensive "not because we are against freedom of belief and religion, which we want as the foundation for the new Iraq, but because we are familiar with the mentality and culture of Shiite Muslims and we know that what they want is a theocratic Iraq founded on Islamic law."

"There is a danger that we Christians may have to choose between remaining in Iraq as second-class citizens deprived of our rights or leaving this land of our fathers," he said.

"I hope the rest of the world will see the danger and continue to help Iraq become a truly secular and democratic country where all groups are respected," he said.

PERIL AND HOPE

Dr. George Eisen, executive director of the Center for International Education at Nazareth College in Rochester, said Iraq has many advantages in terms of rebuilding. A



Iraqi boys play near an open sewer drain flowing down a Baghdad street May 11. One month after the fall of Saddam Hussein, basic needs like water and electricity are still scarce in areas as the U.S. administration concentrates on formation of an interim government. Cholera cases and other indicators of unsanitary water conditions have been detected around the country.

Middle East expert, having worked in Israel, Egypt, Yemen and Jordan in the 1960s and 1970s, Eisen said that Iraq boasts a well-educated, highly trained population that can set up an efficient civil administration.

"You don't have to completely retrain them," he said of Iraqis working to set up a government. "A Western-style administration is quite possible."

Yet Eisen said the United States must be sensitive to various concerns in Iraq if it is to succeed in leaving it in good hands. If the United States wants to avoid looking like an occupier and earning enmity in the process, for example, it should consider relying on the United Nations to supply an international peacekeeping force, he said.

While it will be up to the Iraqis to choose how their nation is restructured, Eisen said Iraq's neighbors will be closely watching whatever form of government it eventually adopts. In particular, he noted, it would be better if Iraq became a confederation in which power was shared between various groups than if the country was split up. Such a confederation would serve as a

counterbalance to such regional powers as Iran, he said.

"You'd need something large enough to counterbalance, but not so powerful as to threaten its neighbors," he said.

Eisen also noted that it's up to concerned people everywhere to help Iraq rebuild, including concerned Catholics. Nongovernmental organizations, or NGOs, such as Catholic Relief Services are crucial to rebuilding Iraq, he said.

"In every part of the world, often the NGOs function much better than the government," Eisen said. "Governments are highly bureaucratic, and highly bureaucratic organizations don't work too well in responding to the needs of people."

CAN PEACE BE WON?

Winning the peace requires a long-term view, said Gerry Powers, director of the U.S. bishops' Office of International Justice and Peace, adding there is a temptation to take a short-term view of things.

"You're talking in terms of years, not months," Powers said. "It's going to require enormous amounts of money, of lots of troops — resources

HOW YOU CAN HELP

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of all kinds — and staying power."

Ray Jennings, a senior fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace, said the postwar effort must "set up systems to deal with the conflict of change" because of the "day-to-day challenge to authority that exists in every state."

Jennings said the State Department should be the primary actor in guiding reconstruction efforts.

"It is the Pentagon, and (Defense) Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in particular, who, having run the war effort, now want to control postwar reconstruction and even the distribution of humanitarian aid," said the Rev. Jim Wallis, pastor of Sojourners Community Church in Washington and editor-in-chief of *Sojourners* magazine.

"The Pentagon has won an easy war, but it will never win the peace," Rev. Wallis said. "The churches will support humanitarian aid organizations over the Pentagon to lead relief efforts, and they will support a U.N. lead for postwar reconstruction."

Jennings noted that the military has experience in warfare but not in police activity. With the war over, the United States needs to "find people (within Iraq), vet them, put them back into service — and find out who needs to be called to account" for misdeeds under the past Iraqi regime, Jennings said. This process, he added, "needs to be fair and speedy."

Contains reporting by Rob Cullivan in Rochester.

GENERAL

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