

Communiqué

On 4th January 2012, Their Excellencies the Maronite Bishops held, at Bkerkeh, their monthly meeting, which was presided over by His Beatitude Bechara Peter Rai, with the participation of His Beatitude and Eminence Cardinal Nasrallah Butros Sfeir and the presence of the two Patriarchal administrators and Superiors General of Maronite Orders. They studied Church and national matters. At the end of the meeting, they issued the following communiqué:

1. At the start of this New Year, the Fathers present to their sons and daughters, at home and abroad, and to all the Lebanese their warmest congratulations and wishes, hoping that God makes of it a Year of good and blessing for all. It is a year full of spiritual and ecclesiastical occasions and events, such as the session of the World Bishops Synod about the word of God, an announcement of eternal joy for humans, the Jubilee of the Year of faith, which His Holiness the Pope will declare on the occasion of the fiftieth Year of the Ecumenical Second Vatican Council, and the publication of the Apostolic Exhortation related to the Bishops Synod about the Christians of the Levant.

2. In spite of the crises witnessed all over the world, because of the increasing violence due to oppressions and wars, and conflicts, killing, blood shedding, and marginalization, a situation which arouses, in many, feelings of despair about the future, the Church declares again, in the Christmas time and the start of the New Year, its belief that Christ, the true Light, has appeared to the world. He is a light full of «kindness» as Saint Paul the Apostle says (Ti 3:4) and not violence. We also call to imitate God's kindness towards Man in his mutual dealing with public and national common affairs, not relying upon force wherever

mercy is possible, avoiding oppression even for the service of noble causes.

3. Few days ago we turned on a Year of Lebanon's age and there is an amount of questions and files still unanswered because of the political division which the homeland is living. The citizen knows no more where to get the right news. That's why the Fathers call upon the authorities to rise above divisions, be committed to the Constitution, laws and traditions out of which a sound government gets its inspiration.

4. What is most worrying for the Fathers is the precarious security situation, the scarcity of answers and efficient measures towards the almost daily incidents. Among which are the attack against the UNIFIL Forces, launching of rockets out of Lebanese territories, explosives in Tyre region, precarious security situation in camps, acts of kidnapping and stealing and the aggression against people's life, public institutions and private properties. That's why the Fathers call upon the political authority to take matters firmly in hand, execute the resolutions of the national dialogue about arms, throughout the whole country, and resume the discussions of related subjects, restrict the dealing in security forces to the political authority and specialized security forces which have, with thanks, made efforts that have prevented important incidents during the feast period.

5. The Fathers welcomed the Council of Ministers' resolution which approved the bill of recovering citizenship, so as to give the Lebanese abroad their national rights, link them to their mother homeland and give them back the right to participate in national questions. The Fathers are keen to draw the attention to the necessity of distinguishing between recovering citizenship and participation in the elections. They are two rights tied each to the other without losing each its particularity.

6. The Fathers call back to mind the question of the appointments, a case suspended times ago, and the necessity to

hurry in carrying them out. Because delaying them impairs the work in the public administration, judiciary, control bodies, diplomatic corps and others. This causes vacancies and unjustified derogations in many posts, some of which have been occupied by procuration or notification, for a long time. In this matter, they call to mind the duty to stick to the separation of powers and not politicizing the institutions: two fundamental bases in a State of law.

7. The Fathers look anxiously to the living conditions. The citizen is abandoned as a prey for the uncontrolled rise of prices and the dangerously increasing economic crisis. They warn against the hesitation taking place about the question of salaries and other rights. They have become matters subjected to political allurements and do not take into consideration any of the two concerned sides: workers and owners.

8. At the end, the Fathers renew their congratulations and wishes to all for the New Year. They ask God to make of it a blessed year for their families so they enjoy unity, love and tranquility, and for our homeland Lebanon and the countries of this region, may security, conciliation, prosperity and peace reign.