



Written by [James Heiser](#) on April 1, 2011

Al-Qaeda Attack Kills 56 in Iraq

A further sign of what America's "victory" in Iraq truly means was witnessed in a brutal incident of mass murder in the city of Tikrit. The latest 56 violent deaths in a nation which has witnessed over 100,000 such civilian deaths since 2003 may be the latest signal that the carnage in Iraq is far from at an end.

The latest slaughter, which is being blamed on al-Qaeda, took place at the end of a five-hour siege, in which terrorists detonated their explosive vests after executing several members of the local government. An Associated Press story claims that the attack was intended as a demonstration of the weakness of the Iraqi regime:



The five-hour standoff in Tikrit, former dictator Saddam Hussein's home town, ended only when the attackers blew themselves up in one of the bloodiest days in Iraqi this year.

First they set fire to the bodies of the three slain Salahuddin province councilmen in a brutal, defiant show of how insurgents still render Iraq unstable — even if it has so far escaped the political unrest rolling across the Arab world. "Why did they shoot him and set fire to his poor body?" said Salahuddin government spokesman Mohammed al-Asi, trying not to weep when confirming the killing of lawmaker Mehdi al-Aaran, an elderly man who headed the council's religious affairs committee. ...

Tuesday's attack left 56 victims dead and 98 wounded, including government workers, security forces and bystanders, said Salahuddin health director Dr. Raied Ibrahim. Many died in the volleys of gunfire and explosions. Among the dead were councilman Abdullah Jebara, a vocal al-Qaeda foe; the council's health committee chairman, Wathiq al-Samarai; and Iraqi journalist Sabah al-Bazi, a correspondent for Al-Arabiya satellite TV channel and a freelancer for CNN and Reuters.

In the past few months, as a series of revolutions have erupted in several predominantly Muslim nations, attention has gradually drifted away from Iraq; concerns that Jihadists might rise to power in nations such as Egypt and Libya has taken the spotlight off the instabilities which continue to plague Iraq. The horrific violence which was unleashed on Iraq minority Christian population [last Christmas](#) was quickly forgotten; a series of bombs detonated at Christian homes throughout Baghdad received scant notice. Nevertheless, as one priest observed at the time: "Iraq is bleeding every day." Even the implications of the return to Iraq of [Mogtada al-Sadr](#)—a Shiite cleric whom coalition forces once sought to take into custody—seemed to be ignored.

The slaughter in Tikrit is further evidence that America's experiment in nation building in Iraq is far from the success two administrations have now claimed it to be. In fact, Archbishop Bashar Warda recently declared that the plight of his nation is so grave that the Church may soon disappear Iraq after



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surviving for centuries under Muslim rule. According to [an article at CatholicHerald.co.uk](#), only a tiny remnant of Christians remain in Iraq:

Speaking in Westminster yesterday, alongside Archbishop Vincent Nichols, Archbishop Warda said that there were fewer than 200,000 Christians left in Iraq and “the time for waiting” was running out.

Declaring that figure to be “optimistic”, he said: “From what we have seen so far our people have lost patience. The past is terrifying, the present is not promising. All is left is the very limited choice of emigration, to Jordan and Turkey.”

He cited Mosul, one of the most dangerous cities in the world to be a Christian, where hundreds were driven out in October 2009, saying: “In 2003 there were 4,000 Chaldean families, 1,000 Christians from other churches, and 11 active Chaldean churches. Now six churches have been closed, and if it goes this way, it won’t be this long before certain areas of Iraq are evacuated. “We have freedom of worship, but not freedom of religion, that is not allowed, in any Islamic state.”

The plight of the Church in Iraq is a key indicator of the future of the nation. Even given the vicious character of the regime of Saddam Hussein, there was not a mass emigration of Christians. Now, sectarian violence is on the rise and those Christians who still remain in Iraq wonder how much longer they can go on. The latest round of al-Qaeda’s violence against its enemies in the home town of Saddam Hussein signals just how far from stability Iraq truly is.

Photo: An Iraqi soldier is pushed in a wheelchair by his brother at a hospital in Tikrit, 80 miles (130 kilometers) north of Baghdad, Iraq, Wednesday, March 30, 2011.: AP Images



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