



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on June 26, 2014

Christians in Mosul, Iraq, Pay “Protection” Tax

Since militants from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria Group (ISIS) seized control of the northern city of Mosul earlier this month, life for Christians in the city has predictably worsened. Salama al-Khafaji, a member of the UN High Commission for Human Rights in Iraq and a former member of the U.S.-backed Iraqi Governing Council, told the Arabic-language *Alsumaria News* that the ISIS occupation regime “is imposing on Christians a minimum payment of \$250, with [the] amount varying depending on the type of work/profession performed by Christian citizens.”



The ISIS is also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Al-Khafaji is a Shiite who does not want Iraq to become a theocracy. She was trained as a dentist and believes in giving women a role in Iraq’s government. Therefore, she has little use for the brand of Islamic militancy of ISIS. The Blaze quoted al-Khafaji’s statement to *Alsumaria News*, in which she expressed sympathy for the plight of Christians in Mosul:

The economic situation in Mosul is extremely difficult, and there are no financial resources or job opportunities except for vegetable shops; any other businesses are non-existent. Citizens are at a loss now as to how to make ends meet; how can they pay those amounts to ISIS?

The ISIS has imposed the “jizya,” which under Islamic law is a per capita tax levied on an Islamic state’s non-Muslim residents. In theory, non-Muslim subjects paying the jizya should be permitted to practice their faith, to enjoy a measure of communal autonomy, to be entitled to the Muslim state’s protection from outside aggression, and to be exempt from the zakat tax levied on Muslim citizens. However, any “protection” Christians in Mosul receive from the ISIS is likely to be more like the “protection” American gangsters used to provide to compliant store owners, than protection against any outside aggressors.

The jizya has been eliminated by legitimate governments throughout the Muslim world; however, the ISIS is not a government, but an Islamic militant group founded by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the former leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq.

On October 4, 2011, the U.S. State Department had listed al-Baghdadi as a “Specially Designated Global Terrorist” and offered a \$10-million reward for information leading to his capture or death.

Al-Baghdadi moved to Syria after the beginning of that country’s revolution against Bashar al-Assad, and in April 2013 announced the merger of his group with Syria’s Jabhat al Nusra, with himself still in overall command, under the new name of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

The situation of Christians in Mosul is but a small part of the hardship and outright persecutions that Iraqi Christians have suffered since the United States and its allies forcibly removed Saddam Hussein from power to enforce illegitimate UN “resolutions.”



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In an opinion piece in the *Wall Street Journal* for April 16, Ron Prozor, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, wrote about the fate of Christians in Iraq: "Terrorists deliberately target Christian worshippers. This past Christmas, 26 people were killed when a bomb ripped through a crowd of worshippers leaving a church in Baghdad's southern Dora neighborhood."

The anti-Christian turmoil in Iraq since the ouster of Saddam Hussein over 10 years ago is reflected in the figures Prozor cited. He noted that during the past 10 years, nearly two-thirds of Iraq's 1.5 million Christians have been forced to flee their homes because of the anti-Christian violence. Many emigrated to Syria, which like Iraq under Hussein, was tolerant of Christians. However, they are "once again becoming victims of unrelenting persecution. Syria's Christian population has dropped from 30 percent in the 1920s to less than 10 percent today."

An Iraqi-born priest, Father Michael Bazzi, who is now pastor of a Chaldean Catholic church in El Cajon, California, told CNA (the Catholic News Agency) on June 18:

Today, there is no future [for Christians in Iraq]. These people [militants], they hang, they behead people who don't believe in their faith. Our village had 15,000 Catholics when I was there. Would you believe today there are how many: only 150 families.

Father Bazzi explained the dynamics in Iraq:

Our church is in trouble today. As long as Iran exists, Shia exists. And they are the majority in Iraq. And as long as Saudi Arabia is there, and the Emirate, that means Sunni has to exist.... (But) those people go against each other because of their faith. And as Christians, we are always caught in the middle.

An article in the *Catholic World Report* on June 25 summarized Father Bazzi's opinion on what the U.S. response to the situation in Iraq should be: "He doesn't consider U.S. financial intervention a viable solution to the rapidly disintegrating situation in Iraq. He warned that U.S. intervention may instead foster sectarian divides between the Shia-backed government and the Sunni minority in the country."

Some Christians fleeing from Mosul have sought refuge in Alqosh, some 30 miles to the north. A report from *Al Jazeera* noted that Alqosh has remained a safe haven for Christians because of the presence of armed forces of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) — known as the Peshmerga.

The report stated that The Kurdish Peshmerga (KRG) has been present in the area since 2003, but has recently expanded its reach by maintaining control of a key strategic area around Rabia, which includes a major border crossing between Iraq and Syria.

The KRG has also sent thousands of troops to stop any ISIS progress toward the Nineveh plains, around Mosul.

The *Al Jazeera* report noted:

The deadly mix of the rise of ISIL and the ongoing sectarian war between Sunni armed groups and the Shia-dominated Iraqi army has generated unprecedented support for the Peshmerga among vulnerable religious minorities here out of pragmatic considerations.

Among the "vulnerable religious minorities" are Iraq's Christians.

Not all Christians have evacuated far from Mosul, however. A report in the *Telegraph* (U.K.) for June 21 stated that Christian militia members have entrenched themselves in the Christian settlement of Bartella, 10 miles from Mosul. The *Telegraph* interviewed a man identified as Captain Firaz Jacob, who,



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with a small band of 600 militia volunteers, were entrenched. Their militia was backed up by KRG troops sent from the city of Erbil, an hour's drive away. "I stand here waiting for my destiny," Jacob said.

When asked why he and his men were refusing to give up and go, Jacob said was determined to resist the ISIS jihadists and their allies, who had overrun most of the rest of northern Iraq. "We will stay here despite everything," said Jacob. "All these armed groups we have seen, but nevertheless we will remain. We love our Christian way of life, we love our churches and we love our community."

And so, the conflict between moderate Muslims and radical Islamic militants, between Kurds (who once fought the forces of Saddam Hussein) and the ISIS, with Christians usually caught in the middle, goes on. It was an impossible dream to think that U.S. intervention could have had any lasting effect on calming the turmoil in this troubled land, or that a renewed U.S. presence can achieve anything more.

[Photo: St. Elijah's Monastery](#), south of Mosul, dating from the sixth century

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