



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on December 30, 2010

Iraq: As American Troops Leave, Persecuted Christians Flee

Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, the head of the Iraqi government, has said that no American troops should remain in Iraq at the end of 2011. "The last American soldier will leave Iraq.... This agreement is not subject to extension, not subject to alteration. It is sealed." The Prime Minister also granted assurances that his nation will not be pulled into an alliance with Iran, even though that is what some Iraqi politicians want (Iran and Afghanistan have recently signed a memorandum of understanding which brings those two nations into closer cooperation).



"For Iraq to be dragged into an axis or orbit, that's impossible and we reject it whether this comes from Iran, Turkey or the Arabs," he declared.

The Iraqi leader also asserted that Iraq is a secular state. "Our country has the liberal, secular, Islamist, conservative, Christian, Muslim, tribal." This picture of a religiously tolerant nation, however, is in stark contrast to the reality reported by members of the once thriving Christian community of Iraq. On December 13, the *New York Times* reported significant numbers of Iraqi Christians fleeing to the north of the country to escape a new pogrom of violence that Iraqi security forces were unable (or perhaps unwilling) to control. [Nina Shea of Freedom House](#) has called this a "ruthless cleansing campaign by Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish militants."

The democracy in Iraq, like most parliamentary democracies around the world, is built upon coalitions. Prime Minister al-Maliki must have the followers of the Muslim cleric Moqtada al-Sadr to stay in power. Although al-Sadr was not given any direct role in Iraqi security forces, his factions nevertheless occupy positions of power in the Iraqi government, and he could bring down the Maliki government, if he wished. Democratization of lands whose people and culture are intolerant does not bring peace and freedom. Americans should pay heed to the warning of the Founding Fathers that it was a *republic*, and not a democracy, that they were proposing for our national government. Still less did men like Jefferson and Franklin wish our nation to have a parliamentary democracy, such as in Iraq and much of the world, which requires a constant shuffling of cliques and factions within the national legislature to maintain political power. (And, of course, it might also be added that a republic, and not an empire, was our Founders' objective.)

The American government has taken very little action since the fall of Saddam Hussein to protect the ancient Christian community in Iraq, which has suffered savage persecution since "Operation Iraqi Freedom." Another ancient Christian community, the [Armenians](#), was rounded up, slaughtered, tortured, and enslaved by the Ottoman Turks about one hundred years ago. The American government, when our nation was neutral in the First World War, could have exercised some influence on the Turkish government and render some assistance to the Armenians. Just as importantly, American correspondents could help focus world attention on the plight of the Iraqi Christians.



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It is not entirely clear exactly what the American government could do to protect Iraqi Christians now anyway. Our troops are leaving Iraq, as most Americans and Iraqis want. If our soldiers stayed behind to protect these Christians, then the resentment of Muslim Iraqis would probably grow over time. If foreign powers such as Iran exert influence over Iraq — which would dramatically complicate the situation for American forces in Iraq — then it is certain that radicalized Shia leaders in Iran will be more intolerant, not less, than al-Maliki.

Ann Coulter, shortly after the attacks of 9/11, offered a very politically incorrect solution: Conquer these lands, kill their leaders, and convert the population to Christianity. Forced conversions, as Coulter knows, are not the answer, but she had the right idea: When peoples raised to believe in radical Islam accept, instead, the compassion and peace of Christianity, then — and only then — can those lands be happy.

Instead, today, the true solution to the problems of Iraq and neighboring lands — the embrace of Christianity — has been replaced by a dull, mindless trust that democracy, even forced democracy, will somehow make a nation content and benign. The ancient community of Christians in Iraq knows differently.

Photo of Moqtada al-Sadr: AP Images



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