



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on July 21, 2014

## Iraqi Christians Flee Mosul Under Threat From ISIS Terrorists

Following a threat of extermination at the hands of the terrorist group Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), virtually all Christians have fled the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, a community the faithful have called home for some 1,700 years.

ISIS thugs ordered all Christians to leave the city by noon on Saturday, July 19, pay an exorbitant fine, or face “death by the sword,” reported [CNN](#), after Christians declined to attend a meeting ISIS had called to “discuss” their presence in Mosul. Christian residents of Mosul said they had been afraid to attend the meeting called by ISIS, and were given the ultimatum shortly afterward.



“A total of 52 Christian families left the city of Mosul early Saturday morning [July 19], with an armed group prohibiting some of them from taking anything but the clothes on their backs,” reported CNN. One resident told CNN that armed terrorists identifying with ISIS had warned Christians, “You are to leave all of your money, gold, jewelry, and go out with only the clothes on you.”

The [New York Times](#) noted that since 2003, “when Saddam Hussein was ousted, the Christians of Mosul, one of the oldest communities of its kind in the world, had seen their numbers dwindle from over 30,000 to just a few thousand, but once ISIS swept into the city in early June, there were reports that the remaining Christians had fled.”

Residents who belong to Chaldean, Assyrian, and other Christian sects had originally hoped to be able to stay in Mosul, “to continue the quiet practice of their faith in the city that had been their home for more than 1,700 years,” reported the *Times*, but the ISIS edict caused that hope to quickly fade.

Chaldean patriarch Louis Sako, leader of Iraq’s largest Christian group, said the ISIS ultimatum had caused most Christians to give up hope of living in harmony with the Sunni Islamic ISIS group. “Christian families are on their way to Dohuk and Arbil [in Kurdistan],” said the patriarch. “For the first time in the history of Iraq, Mosul is now empty of Christians.”

As Christians left the area, ISIS operatives claimed their homes and property in the name of the terrorist group, writing in black letters, “Property of the Islamic State of Iraq.”

ISIS also destroyed relics and took down Christian symbols from churches, replacing them with Islamic symbols or ISIS-themed graffiti. Photos and videos show men wielding sledge hammers destroying centuries-old tombs of both Muslims and Christians in Iraq’s Nineveh Province. The website [ChristianToday](#) featured a [YouTube video](#) of a man using a sledgehammer to destroy a crypt identified as that containing the remains of Jonah.



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ChristianToday noted that ISIS, composed mainly of Sunni Muslim extremists, controls not only Mosul, but also the Iraqi cities of Baiji and Fallujah, as well as parts of Iraq. For the past several weeks the terrorists have “raped and killed thousands of Christians and Shiite Muslims across the two countries,” reported the Christian website. “Churches and Shiite shrines have been bombed, and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have fled the area because of the violence.”

According to the *New York Times*, some non-Christian sects have been even more ill-treated than Christians, including the “Yazidis, a tiny sect that has survived for centuries and whose theology fuses elements of Islam, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism; Shabaks, who are often described as Shiites whose language is close to Persian and who take beliefs from different traditions; and Shiite Turkmen.”

The *Times* reported that over the past week, ISIS had been “setting up checkpoints along a road that the Shabaks have been using to flee the area and apprehending them, according to Shabak families who have escaped. While sometimes ISIS appears to abduct people for ransom, in many cases there have been summary executions.”

Estimates by some human rights groups have put the death toll from ISIS violence in the first six months of 2014 at nearly 6,000. “More than 600,000 people were driven from their homes during June alone, doubling the number of internally displaced people in Iraq to more than 1.2 million,” the *Times* reported, quoting human rights groups that are monitoring the statistics.

“Being a Turkman, a Shabak, a Yazidi, or a Christian in ISIS territory can cost you your livelihood, your liberty, or even your life,” said Sarah Leah Whitson, director of Human Rights Watch for the Middle East.

Whitson charged that “ISIS seems intent on wiping out all traces of minority groups from areas it now controls in Iraq,” adding that “no matter how hard its leaders and fighters try to justify these heinous acts as religious devotion, they amount to nothing less than a reign of terror.”□

Photos shows Christians who fled Mosul, Iraq, praying in a church in Qaraqoush on the outskirts of Mosul: AP Images

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