



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on May 30, 2017

## ISIS Bombs Kill 31 People and Wound Many More in Baghdad

A powerful bomb explosion set by an ISIS group outside an ice cream parlor in Baghdad and a subsequent rush hour car bomb in another area of Iraq's capital killed at least 31 people on May 30, Iraqi officials reported.

The bomb explosion outside the ice cream shop took place soon after midnight, and despite the late hour the shop was crowded with families going out for a treat after ending their Ramadan fast. Muslims fast from sunrise until sunset during the month of Ramadan, then end their fast with a late meal. The attack outside the ice cream parlor killed 17 people and wounded 32, police and health officials said.



That bombing was followed by a second attack, as a car filled with explosives was detonated during the morning rush hour near the state-run Public Pension Office in Baghdad's Al-Shahada Bridge area. That attack killed 14 more people, and another 37 were wounded, a police officer reported.

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An Associated Press report cited separate online statements in which ISIS claimed responsibility for the two attacks, saying its suicide bombers targeted gatherings of Shiites. Although the AP could not verify the authenticity of the statements they were posted on a militant website commonly used by extremists.

A report from the Qatar-based Al Jazeera network noted that ISIS considers members of Iraq's Shia Muslim majority to be heretics and frequently carries out attacks against them.

However, it must be pointed out that although ISIS is composed of radicals from the Sunni branch of Islam, they are by no means typical of Sunnis, most of whom have enjoyed cordial relations with Westerners for years. In contrast, the Shiites, whom ISIS apparently is prone to targeting, include members of the anti-Western revolutionary government that has ruled Iran since 1979. Therefore, attempting to define Islamic radicalism solely by which of the major branches of Islam it members adhere to is bound to be very difficult and confusing for most non-Muslim Westerners.

Al Jazeera quoted Hayder al-Khoei, a London-based Middle East expert, who told the network: "Families were out and the [ice cream parlor] was crowded."

Al-Khoei explained that the ISIS bombers "timed Tuesday's attack to cause maximum impact."

"The suicide bomber detonated himself just after midnight. It was a hot day and he targeted a popular ice cream parlor in Baghdad."

The Al Jazeera report went on to note that the attacks in Baghdad come as Iraqi forces are engaged in fighting to retake the last ISIS-held areas of Mosul, a city that was once group's stronghold.



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Iraqi commanders say the offensive, which recently entered its eighth month, will mark the end of ISIS in Iraq, but believe that the terrorist group will likely increase its attacks against civilian targets following its military defeats.

Michael Pregent, a former U.S. army officer and Iraqi government adviser with the Hudson Institute think tank, told Al Jazeera:

“[The May 30s attack is] meant to stoke a sectarian flame to get some sort of response from Shia militias from the government. It’s also meant to discredit the Baghdad government.

“That’s something that Shia militias, recently criticized by Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, can also use to criticize the current government ahead of the 2018 elections.”

“Attacks like this demonstrate [ISIS’s] desperation,” Iraqi analyst Ali Hadi Al-Musawi told Al Jazeera. “They’re being thoroughly routed on the battlefield, they’re no longer able to function as a proto-state in Iraq, so they have to resort to attacking soft targets at an ice cream parlor in order to maintain some sort of perverse relevance.”

While the latest target of ISIS in Iraq seems to be mostly Shiite Muslims, during the conquest of Mosul and surrounding areas of Iraq several years ago, the terrorist group engaged in the wholesale slaughter and persecution of Christians.

After the fall of Mosul, ISIS demanded Assyrian Christians in the city to convert to Islam, pay tribute, or face execution, by July 19, 2014. ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi further demanded that Christians who do not agree with those terms must “leave the borders of the Islamic Caliphate” within a specified deadline. This resulted in a complete Assyrian Christian exodus from Mosul, ending 1600 years of continuous Christian presence in the city.

On February 3, 2016, the European Union recognized the persecution of Christians by ISIS as genocide by a unanimous vote. The United States followed suit on March 15, 2016, in declaring these atrocities as genocide.

The reason that ISIS was able to conquer Mosul and large areas of Northern Iraq was that the sole stabilizing force in the area, the government of Saddam Hussein, had been defeated by the U.S. invasion.

Sir Christopher Meyer, Britain’s ambassador to the United States from 1997 to 2003, said that the U.S. and UK invasion of Iraq was “perhaps the most significant reason” for the then-current sectarian violence.

“We are reaping what we sowed in 2003. This is not hindsight. We knew in the run-up to war that the overthrow of Saddam Hussein would seriously destabilize Iraq after 24 years of his iron rule,” Meyer wrote in the *Daily Mail* in June 2014.

As *The New Americans’* foreign correspondent, Alex Newman, wrote in an article in 2012, “[Christian Massacres: A Result of U.S. Foreign Policy](#)”:

In the wake of the U.S. invasion and occupation — which in 2007 the Congressional Budget Office estimated would cost U.S. taxpayers about \$2 trillion — Christianity in Iraq might very well be fully eradicated. Reliable estimates found that about 1.4 million Christians lived in Iraq before 2003. Today, that number is less than 500,000, with some experts claiming the true figure is actually around 200,000. In all, some two-thirds of the nation’s Christians have already fled or been killed....



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Under the secular dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, Christians and other minorities were largely protected from Islamist violence and genocide — unlike in many areas of the Middle East. Indeed, the tyrant’s socialist Ba’th Party was founded by Michel Aflaq, an Orthodox Christian, and actually held “freedom of religion” as one of its core tenets.

Of course, as is well documented, enemies of the Iraqi regime were viciously persecuted and slaughtered. Despite the fact that the U.S. government once supported the regime, Hussein has been properly characterized as a monster. But under the dictator’s iron fist, Christians worshipped openly throughout Iraq and were not treated any worse than Muslims or anyone else.

Anti-Christian violence, prevalent across much of the Middle East, was not tolerated. Almost unprecedented in the entire region’s contemporary history: A Catholic, Tariq Aziz, served as Iraq’s Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister.

Unfortunately, the sad lesson that Iraq provides seems wasted on our foreign policy establishment, as our government continues to support the allies of ISIS and al-Qaeda who are attempting to overthrow another authoritarian — but Christian-tolerant, strongman — Syria’s Bashar al-Assad.

*Photo of aftermath of bomb attack outside ice cream shop in Iraq: AP Images*

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