



Written by on October 14, 2008

Violence Grows Against Iraqi Christians in Mosul

The official report said one of the bombs had targeted a U.S. military patrol and the other was directed at an Iraqi police patrol.

Duraïd Kashmūlah, the governor of Nineveh province, which includes Mosul, blamed “al-Qaeda and their followers, and people who want to destroy relations between the people of Mosul,” for the violence. Mosul, which is located on the Tigris River about 200 miles north of Baghdad, is a predominantly Sunni Muslim city. But it is also home to one of the oldest Christian communities in the world and is in an area historically known for harmonious relations among adherents of various religions.



“These attacks have never been seen in Mosul city. Centuries and centuries we were living together,” said Christian parliamentary deputy Yonadam Kanna in an interview with the *Washington Post* before an October 12 meeting with Prime Minister al-Maliki.

An estimated 4,000 people have fled Mosul during the past week to escape the killings targeting Christians. Most have gone to predominantly Christian villages in other areas of Nineveh province. “The violence is the fiercest campaign against the Christians since 2003,” Governor Kashmūlah was quoted saying by the *Independent*, a British newspaper. “Among those killed over the last 11 days were a doctor, an engineer and a handicapped person.”

Five years ago, there were 800,000 Christians in Iraq, but because of massive emigration following the U.S.-led invasion and the subsequent violence against Christians, their number is now down to 250,000. The exodus from Mosul is similar. Even before the latest round of violence, the city’s Christian population had declined from 20,000 to 10,000. The *Washington Post* noted: “Most Iraqi Christians are Chaldeans, an Eastern Rite denomination that recognizes the Pope’s authority. Others belong to the Assyrian Catholic Church or Protestant denominations.”

Under the repressive secular government of Saddam Hussein, Christians in Iraq enjoyed a fair degree of religious freedom and tolerance. For example, Hussein’s vice president, Tariq Aziz, was a Chaldean Christian. And because of the authoritarian nature of that regime, the anarchy that has since permitted terrorists and religious extremists to attack their rivals (including Shiite attacks on Sunnis — and vice versa) was nonexistent.



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