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Shiites attack Assyrian town in North Iraq

AINA (26.12.2009) / HRWF Int. (27.12.2009) – Email: info@hrwf.net – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> – A group of armed Shabaks attacked the Assyrian (also known as Chaldean and Syriac) town of Bartilla this Christmas morning without any apparent provocation. The entry checkpoint into Bartilla was taken over and controlled by the attackers for more than 5 hours. Residents report the angry mob barged through the Assyrian market, tearing down Christmas decorations from store windows, including throwing down a picture of St. Mary into the dirt.

Shabak are a minority group scattered over 35 villages located in the east of Mosul. They are mostly Shi'a and Sunni.

According to witnesses, a procession of men, women and children was heading towards the church, singing and holding crosses and relics. The attackers numbered about 100 and were described as outsiders. They were dispersed among the locals and started harassing the children and the people in the procession by throwing rocks at them, which led to confrontations.

The attackers attempted to enter St. Mary church, located in the center of the market, demanding to perform the Shiite rituals of self-flagellation inside the church. The Church guards stopped the attackers, at which time gunfire was exchanged, leaving four Christian residents wounded including a policeman. One man is in critical condition.

Rumors stated the Christians took down Islamic signs. This was denied by the Christian residents. According to a church guard, this never happened.

Witnesses reported the Shabak attackers are also residents of Bartilla and are led by Hassan Ganjou, allegedly a former member of the Mahdi Army (JAM) and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), before working as a private security guard for Shabak Parliament member Dr. Hunain. Mr. Ganjou is currently a member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

Witnesses report that Mr. Qusay Abbas, the only Shabak member of the Nineveh Provincial Council, was touting a gun and amongst attackers.

This year, Christmas and Ashoura, the Shiite commemoration of Imam Hussain's martyrdom, coincided. Mainly out of fear of reprisals, church officials announced in local and satellite Iraqi TV channels that Christian communities in Iraq, especially in Baghdad and Basra, would not hold public celebrations this year out of "respect" for their fellow Muslim countrymen who are in mourning for Imam Hussain.

The Christian community in Bartilla, which fears further attacks, is unarmed. This small majority Christian town is located approximately 28 miles north of Mosul in the province of Nineveh. The Kurdistan Democratic Party headquarters are located in Bartilla. Sources say that when the KDP members were approached for assistance, their reply was "we can only defend our headquarters."

In the past, Assyrians have included Shabak, Sabeen and Yazidi minorities in their plea for rights and equal treatment under the law for ethnic minorities.

The Governor of Mosul paid a visit to the area to assess the situation and other provincial military officials have promised Iraqi Army support should the situation escalate. One resident said "this is a stark reminder of the 1933 massacre of our people in [Simeleh and Soriya](#). Are the Christians of Iraq due for another massacre?"

Mosul attacks on two Christian churches, three dead and several injured

AsiaNews (23.12.2009) / HRWF Int. (25.12.2009) – Email: info@hrwf.net – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> – Two separate bombs struck this morning in Mosul, the Chaldean church of St. George and Syriac Orthodox Church of St. Thomas. The death toll so far is of three dead - a Chaldean Christian and two Muslims - and several wounded. Louis Sako, archbishop of Kirkuk, speaks to AsiaNews of a "disturbing message" ahead of Christmas, keeping tensions high as well as fear of further violence in northern Iraq.

Sources for AsiaNews in Mosul confirm that "the situation for Christians continues to worsen, given that the Christians buildings are again being targeted by terrorists. The two churches hit are two old buildings, of great historical and cultural value".

In the attack on the church of Saint George three people were killed: a Chaldean Christian and two Muslims, others were injured. Local witnesses report that the explosion was caused by "a cart of vegetables, filled with bombs." From the initial reconstruction, it seems that the target of the attack was a police barracks in the district of Khazraj. In the last six weeks in Mosul four churches and a convent of Dominican nuns have been attacked. The explosions were caused by car bombs producing serious damage to buildings and adjacent homes, Christian and Muslim. Five Christians have been murdered and others have become victims of kidnapping for ransom. These targeted attacks testify to the "ethnic cleansing" in act against the Christian community throughout Iraq.

Louis Sako, archbishop of Kirkuk, believes today attacks are yet another "disturbing message" to two days before Christmas. These threats, stresses the prelate, "continue to influence the Christian community" that hopes "for peace" but is the victim of violence. "The message of peace and hope - reaffirms the archbishop of Kirkuk - announced by angels, remains our best wishes for Christmas for the entire country: we want to work together to build peace and hope in the hearts of all men and women of Iraq."

65 churches attacked or bombed since 2004

AINA (25.12.2009) / HRWF Int. (25.12.2009) – Email: info@hrwf.net – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> – 65 churches were attacked or bombed since June, 2004: 40 in Baghdad, 19 in Mosul, 5 in Kirkuk and 1 in Ramadi. The following is a list of the bombings.

Last updated on December 25, 2009. For a report on the persecution of Assyrians in Iraq, see [Incipient Genocide: The Ethnic Cleansing of the Assyrians of Iraq](#) (See <http://www.aina.org/reports/ig.pdf>)
[December 23, 2009: 2 churches bombed.](#)

In Mosul the church of St. George and the church of St. Thomas were bombed, killing three people. The church of St. Thomas is 1200 years old.
[December 15, 2009: 2 churches bombed.](#)

The Al Gahera (Our Lady of Purity) Syrian Orthodox Church in Mosul's city center was bombed and significantly damaged. 4 persons were killed and 40 injured.

The Al Beshara (Annunciation) Syrian Catholic Church in Mosul was bombed at 10:30. The bomb caused a minor explosion and damaged the wall, but nobody was hurt.
[November 26, 2009: 1 church, 1 convent bombed.](#)

In the western Jadida (New Mosul) district, the Church of St Ephrem and the St Theresa Convent of Dominican Nuns were bombed and heavily damaged. No casualties were reported.
[July 12, 2009: 7 churches bombed.](#)

Seven churches were bombed in Baghdad, killing 4 and injuring 18. The churches are:

The Church of St Mary in Sharaa Philistine, were four were killed
The Church of Saint George in the district at Madidi
The St. Joseph Church in Nafak, western Baghdad
The Church of the Sacred Heart
The church of St Peter and Paul
The Assyrian Church of Saint Mary
The St. James Church in Dora
[January 9, 2008: 2 churches bombed.](#)

Two churches were bombed in central and northern Kirkuk; three people were wounded.
[January 6, 2008: 7 churches bombed.](#)

In Mosul:

Chaldean Church of Saint Paul
Nunnery of Dominican Sisters
Orphanage of the Chaldean Sisters
In Baghdad:
Rum Orthodox Church (where the guard was injured)
Mar Ghorghis chaldean church in Ghadir area
Saint Paul Chaldean church in Zafaraniya area where, according to Mgr. Warduni, the carbomb was discovered before its explosion and defused.
Chaldean sisters nunnery in Zafaraniya
One man was slightly injured in these bombings.
[June 4, 2007. 2 churches attacked.](#)

St. Jacob Church, near the Asia Neighborhood (Hay Asya) in Dora, was attacked and the Christian guards killed, the church was looted and will be turned into a mosque. St. John the Baptist Church near the Hay Al-Athoriyeen (Assyrian quarter) was also looted.
[May 31, 2007. 1 convent attacked.](#)

Shiites occupied the Angel Raphael Convent, belonging to the Chaldean Sisters of the Scared Heart, in Dora, Baghdad and turned it into a base for military operations.
[May 18, 2007. 1 church attacked.](#)

St. George Assyrian Church in the Dora neighborhood of Baghdad was firebombed.
[April 14, 2007. 2 churches, 1 monastery attacked.](#)

An Islamic group forcefully removed the Cross from the churches of St. John and St. George in Dora, Baghdad. An affiliated Islamic group in Northern Iraq occupied the Assyrian monastery of Raban Hormuz.
[November 1, 2006. 1 church bombed.](#)

Unknown assailants bombed the entrance of the Dominican Clock Church compound, a Catholic church in Mosul.
[October 8, 2006. 1 church bombed.](#)

Two bombs exploded around 6:30 A.M. near the Church of Virgin Mary on Palestine road in Baghdad. The outer walls of the church were damaged and the windows of many parked cars that belong to the church were shattered. One policeman was killed and many bystanders were injured.

[October 4, 5 2006. 1 church attacked.](#)

A group of men opened fire on the Chaldean Church of the Holy Spirit in Mosul, the second time in 8 days.
[September 27, 2006. 1 church attacked.](#)

A rocket attack was launched against the Chaldean Catholic Church of the Holy Spirit in Mosul.
[September 24, 2006. 1 church bombed.](#)

St. Mary's Cathedral, the home of His Holiness Mar Addai II, Patriarch of The Ancient Church of the East, was bombed. Located in the Riyadh district of Baghdad the cathedral experienced dual bombings, a small IED followed, few minutes after, by a car detonation carrying a large amount of explosives. The bombing was timed to take place as the worshippers were leaving the Sunday morning sermon. 2 were killed and 20 injured.
[September 8, 2006. 1 church bombed.](#)

Two bombs exploded in front of the main gate of a church in al-Za'faraniyya in Baghdad. The explosions caused damage to the church and injured the church guards.
[June 2, 2006. 1 church bombed.](#)

Kaneesat al-Si'aood (The Church of Ascension) in Baghdad was attacked by a rocket bomb. The bomb caused damage to the church building and made a hole in the church dome.
[February 1 2006. 1 church bombed.](#)

The Baghdad Seventh-day Adventist Church was bombed for the second time in two years, injuring an armed guard, one of two permanently stationed to protect the church compound.
[January 29, 2006. 4 churches bombed.](#)

Car bombs exploded outside the Vatican embassy and near four churches in Iraq, killing at least three people.

In Kirkuk, three civilians were killed and one wounded in the attack on the Church of the Virgin, and six civilians were hurt in the blast outside an Orthodox church.

In Baghdad, car bombs exploded outside St Joseph's Catholic Church in the suburb of Sina'a and an Anglican church in the eastern Nidhal area.

[November 2, 2005. 1 church bombed.](#)

At approximately 5:00 P.M. a car bomb exploded near the Church of Mar Giwargis (St. George) in the Assyrian quarter of Almas district in Kirkuk. 3 were killed.

July 16, 2005 1 church bombed.

A small explosion rocked the Assyrian Church in Habbaniya, Ramadi in Iraq. There was some damage to the roof of the church.

[December 7, 2004. 2 churches bombed.](#)

The Al-Tahira Chaldean Catholic Church and Armenian church that was under construction were bombed in Mosul. The first blast struck the al-Tahira ("the pure," in reference to the Virgin Mary) Church about 2:30 p.m. in al-Shifa' neighborhood, eastern Mosul. Ten armed men stormed the church, planted explosives throughout it, and set the bombs off wounding three people and destroying most of it. An hour later, gunmen bombed in al-Wahda neighborhood, western Mosul, an Armenian church under construction. No casualties were reported there.

[November 8, 2004. 1 church bombed.](#)

St Bahnam's Catholic church in Dora, Baghdad was bombed, killing 3 people and wounded 40.

Police said a car bomb had exploded outside the church, but witnesses said it appeared explosives were planted nearby.

[October 16, 2004. 5 churches bombed.](#)

Five churches were bombed in Baghdad in a coordinated attack.

The church of Saint Joseph in the west of the Iraqi capital was hit at about 4:00 am (0100 GMT).

Twenty minutes later, another blast ripped through the streets at another Saint Joseph church, in Dora, southern Baghdad. After another 20 minutes, Saint Paul's church was struck in the same area.

At 4:50 am, the Roman Catholic St. George church in the central district of Karrada was rocked by a blast and engulfed in flames, leaving the wood-built sanctuary completely charred.

A fifth explosion occurred about an hour later at Saint Thomas church in Mansour, to the west.

An artillery shell, believed to be intended for the church, was fired into a car park between a hotel and Saint George's Anglican Church.

[September 11, 2004. 1 church bombed.](#)

A car bomb exploded outside the Virgin Mary Seventh-Day Adventist Church in the Al-Sa'doun Park in the center of Baghdad.

[September 10, 2004. 1 church bombed.](#)

A bomb exploded at the Assyrian Anglican Church at al-Andalus Street in Baghdad. The explosion occurred during the night.

[August 1, 2004. 5 churches bombed.](#)

Five Assyrian, and one Armenian, Churches were bombed simultaneously in Baghdad and Mosul. Twelve Assyrians were killed and some 60 injured:

Church Sayidat al-Najat (Our Lady of Salvation) - Karrada, Baghdad

Church Sayidat al-Zohour (Our Lady of the Flowers) - Karrada, Baghdad (Armenian Catholic Church)

Sts. Peter & Paul, Dora, Baghdad

St. Paul Church - Center of Mosul

St. Elia, Baghdad

St. Mary's Church in east Baghdad (car bomb disarmed by police)

[June 26, 2004. 1 church attacked.](#)

Two unidentified men in a silver Opel throw a hand bomb at the Holy Spirit Church (al-Rooh al-Qudos) in the Akha' quarter in Mosul. The explosion injured the sister of the priest.

Seven churches hit in Baghdad. Four dead

AsiaNews (12.07.2009) / HRWF Int. (14.07.2009) – Email: info@hrwf.net – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> – A series of car bombs targeted seven Chaldean and Orthodox churches of Baghdad tonight.

The worst hit church is the Chaldean Church of St Mary, in Sharaa Philistine, where the patriarchal vicar of Baghdad, Mgr. Sleimon Wardouni officiates. The car bomb exploded on the road that runs alongside the church and left four dead and dozens wounded many seriously.

The other churches, because of their distance from the road, suffered slight damage and some wounded, other churches have not reported damage to people or buildings.

The other churches targeted were: the Chaldean Church of Saint George in the district at Madidi, that of St. Joseph in Nafak (Chaldean), the Church of the Sacred Heart (Chaldean), the church of St Peter and Paul (Syrian Orthodox), and Assyrian church of Saint Mary.

A seventh church, that of St. James in Dora it seems is still in flames hours later.

Only days ago, Msgr. Wardouni had issued a statement to AsiaNews, emphasizing the relative calm that there was in the capital and in Iraq after the departure of American soldiers.

Some journalists in the capital say that the police suspect Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, the head of Al Qaeda in Iraq, of being behind the attacks motivated by revenge for the "martyr of the veil" in Germany. Marwa el-Sherbini, 32 years old and in the third month of pregnancy, was killed in a knife attack in a Dresden courtroom by a German of Russian origin who she had sued for defamation. In the Islamic world she is being called the "martyr of the veil."

In Iraq, an exodus of Christians

By Paul Schemm

AP (14.05.2009) / HRWF Int. (19.05.2009) – Email: info@hrwf.net – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> – Iraq has lost more than half the Christians who once called it home, mostly since the war began, and few who fled have plans to return, The Associated Press has learned.

Pope Benedict XVI called attention to their plight during a Mideast visit this week, urging the international community to ensure the survival of "the ancient Christian community of that noble land."

The number of Arab Christians has plummeted across the Mideast in recent years as increasing numbers seek to move to the West, saying they feel increasingly unwelcome in the Middle East and want a better life abroad.

But the exodus has been particularly stark in Iraq — where sectarian violence since the U.S.-led 2003 invasion has often targeted Christians.

The AP found that hundreds of thousands of Christians have fled.

The situation holds practical implications for Iraq's future. Christians historically made up a large portion of the country's middle class, including key jobs as doctors, engineers, intellectuals and civil servants.

The last official Iraqi census in 1987 found 1.4 million Christians in the country. Now, according to the 2008 U.S. State Department report on International Religious Freedom, that number has dropped to between 550,000 and 800,000.

Some estimate the number is even lower: only 400,000, according to the German Catholic relief organization Kirche in Not. The number is echoed privately by many Iraqi Christians.

The vast majority of the exodus has happened since the 2003 invasion, the State Department and other statistics suggest. The State Department says as many as 1.2 million Christians remained into 2003.

Christians first began leaving Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War, during the economic sanctions and repression under Saddam Hussein, who pushed more Islamist policies. But the trickle turned to a flood after Saddam was toppled in 2003 and the violence escalated, said a prominent Iraqi Christian lawmaker, Younadem Kana.

"I hope to leave for any other place in the world," said Sheeran Surkon, a 27-year-old Iraqi woman who fled to Syria in 2004 after she received death threats, her father disappeared and her beauty salon was blown up. She now awaits resettlement to another country, saying she can't tolerate the violence and new Muslim conservatism in Iraq.

"How can I live there as a woman?" she asked.

Daoud Daoud, 70, a former civil servant in the northern city of Mosul, now spends his time waiting with dozens of others at a Damascus resettlement center, hoping to follow his children to Sweden.

"Iraq as we once knew it is over. For us there is no future there," he said.

More than 2 million refugees of all religions have fled Iraq since the 2003 invasion. The recent ebb in violence has lured some Muslim refugees to return in small numbers.

But few Christians contemplate going back, according to the U.N. High Commissioner on Refugees.

"They simply do not feel safe enough. They cannot sufficiently count on state security or any other force to protect them," said the UNHCR's acting representative in Damascus, Philippe Leclerc.

In a report last year, the head of the UNHCR Iraq support unit noted that Christians are more likely than other fleeing Iraqis to register as refugees in an effort to emigrate to a third country.

"The vast majority of Iraqis still want to return to Iraq when the conditions permit — the notable exception being religious minorities, particularly Christians," the report said.

Signs of the exodus are stark inside the cavernous St. Joseph's church in the middle-class Baghdad neighborhood of Karradah. On a recent day, just 100 Christians, mostly women and children, celebrated Mass in an echoing space that could easily hold 1,000.

Incense filled the air as the parishioners sang hymns in Arabic and ancient Syriac — similar to the Aramaic once spoken by Jesus.

"When I came here to my parish in Karrada, we had 2,000 families," said Monsignor Luis al-Shabi, 70, who started at St. Joseph's 40 years ago. "But now we only have 1,000 — half."

The situation is worse in the Baghdad neighborhood of Dora to the south — where 30,000 prewar Christians fled during the six years of war. The now-quiet neighborhood has only a single church and a handful of Christians.

More troubling, when a group of Christian families recently tried to return to homes in Dora, two Christian women were killed, Iraq's Cardinal Emmanuel III Delly said in an interview after meeting with the pope in nearby Jordan.

Some Christians cite the violence as their reason to flee. Iraqis of all religions and ethnicities have been killed, but Christians had the misfortune to live in some of the worst battlefields, including Dora and the northern city of Mosul, both al-Qaida strongholds.

Execution-style killings late last year targeted Christians in Mosul, as did a string of bombings. In March of last year, the body of Mosul's Chaldean Archbishop was found in a shallow grave a month after he was kidnapped at gunpoint as he left a Mass.

For now, attacks against Christians in Mosul seem to have ebbed. But one priest, who refused to give his name out of fear, told the AP that "despite the current calm in the city, Christians are still afraid of persecution."

Scattered violence continues. On Sunday in a village outside Mosul, the body of a 5-year-old Christian child kidnapped a week earlier was found by police, partially chewed by dogs.

The loss of the small power the community had under Saddam has also played a role in the Christian exodus.

Barred from the army, security services or high-level political positions under Saddam, Christians in Iraq often became doctors, engineers, land owners, and above all civil servants, filling the ministries as technocrats who kept the country running.

But ministries are now controlled by powerful figures in the Sunni and Shiite Muslim communities who prefer to distribute jobs to family and close associates, according to several recent Iraqi government anti-corruption probes.

"It's not a policy of the government of discrimination, but of monopolizing and abusing power for their own pocket and for their own sect," said Christian lawmaker Kana.

Kana and others also say many Christians leave because they think the U.N. refugee agency will fast-track them for resettlement — something the U.N. denies.

"Those most vulnerable are the priority, and among them are Iraq's Christians ... but being a Christian does not mean they will be fast-tracked," said Leclerc, the U.N. official. He added, however, that countries like Germany have said they would like to take more Christians for resettlement because they are particularly targeted.

Kana is highly critical of that policy.

"Maybe they are trying to save some people, but they are destroying the community here — a historic and native people of this country," he said.

Such arguments make little difference to refugees like George Khoshaba Zorbal, a member of a prominent Christian family in Baghdad who once edited the church's magazine. He now lives on handouts in a crowded Damascus apartment with eight other family members.

"I will never go back. I'm afraid the situation there would not improve even after 10 years," he said.

Gunmen kill Christians in Kirkuk, Iraq

Clergy believe attacks were religiously motivated

By Michael Larson

Compass Direct (28.04.2009) / HRWF Int. (01.05.2009) – Email: info@hrwf.net – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> – Gunmen in Iraq shot five Chaldean Catholic Christians in their Kirkuk homes on Sunday (April 26) in two separate attacks, killing three and injuring two.

Cousins Suzan Latif David and Muna Banna David were killed at 10 p.m. in a suburb of the northern Iraqi city. Within a few minutes, Yousif Shaba and his sons Thamir and Basil were also shot in the same area, leaving the 17-year-old Basil dead. Yousif Shaba and Thamir were in critical condition.

Police have not stated if the two attacks were related, but they confirmed the arrest of nine men linked with the assault, a source told Compass. One of them is from the former insurgent stronghold of Ramadi and has suspected links to Al Qaeda.

Chaldean Catholic Archbishop of Kirkuk Louis Sako said the attacks aimed to split the community. Yesterday he presided over the murder victims' funeral, which the city police chief and provincial governor also attended.

"The main object of these crimes is to create chaos and promote strife and division among the people of Kirkuk," Sako said, according to Reuters. "I call on Christians not to be jarred by these crimes and stay in Kirkuk. We are sons of this city."

Kirkuk Province Gov. Abdul Rahman Mustafa echoed the archbishop's comments, calling on Kirkuk's citizens to stand united against the terrorists.

Violence has struck the nation's Christian community particularly hard since the Iraq war began in 2003. Left mostly defenseless in sectarian violence, Christians have been targeted for kidnapping under the assumption that they can garner a large ransom.

Chaldean Christians have been hardest hit in the northern city of Mosul, where thousands of families have fled since an uptick in violence started last October. Some locals believe Kurdish groups are trying to intimidate them into leaving so they can incorporate the city into the semi-autonomous Kurdish region.

But Kirkuk has largely avoided the sectarian bloodshed of the region. For this reason clergy believe the five Christians were targeted purely for their religion.

"They were peaceful Christian families, not involved in any political affiliation or such activities," said Father Emanuel Youkhana of Christian Aid Program Nohadra Iraq, a local humanitarian organization. "What were they involved in that they be targeted in such a brutal way?"

He added that most locals believe the two attacks were coordinated in order to terrorize Christians, as they occurred only a few minutes apart from each other.

"It was not just an accident that the two attacks happened in the same city on the same day at the same time," he said.

The oil-rich city of Kirkuk has been caught in a tug-of-war between its Arab and Kurdish residents. Arabs were resettled there during Saddam Hussein's regime, and Kurds have been moving back to reclaim the homes from which they were forcibly expelled.

But other groups have criticized Kurds for their massive immigration, charging that it is a means to annex the city – and its oil wealth – into the Kurdish region. Kirkuk has a small population of native Christians, with many moving here in recent decades to work in the oil industry. The Christian population is approximately 7,000.

Local police and officials have blamed Al Qaeda for the murders. Fr. Youkhana said there has been no evidence of Al Qaeda involvement, but that "for sure" it was a fundamentalist Islamic terrorist attack. He said security forces are often quick to blame foreign-based Al Qaeda rather than call attention to a violent, homegrown organization.

An Eastern rite denomination in communion with Rome, the Chaldean Catholic Church is Iraq's largest Christian community.

Save the Mandaean of Iraq

The Mandaean Association Union (20.04.2009) / HRWF Int. (30.04.2009) – Email: info@hrwf.net – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> – On Sunday the 19th of April 2009, three Mandaean jewellers were massacred by gunmen in their jewellery shops in the Altobechi area in Baghdad Iraq. This occurred during the mid-morning hours. The assailants used pistols with silencers. Three others were badly injured in this attack and are still in

serious condition. This is a continuation of ongoing attacks against Mandaeans, including the killing of three Mandaeans in their family's store in a busy market in the Al-Sha'ab district of Baghdad. In this incident, which occurred on the 8th of September 2008, an 8 year old boy, along with his father and uncle were slaughtered together; each had several bullets in his head. Many children have been kidnapped and many women raped with inadequate response from the police and Iraqi government.

Including the above noted crimes, the recorded incidents against Mandaeans since 2003 stand at 167 killings, 275 kidnappings, and 298 assaults and forced conversion to Islam. Some include more than one member of a family.

The Mandaean Supreme Council in Iraq has tried several times to bring to the attention of the Iraqi government that the Mandaeans as well as other minorities are continuously targeted and attacked, however their cries have been in vain and no true actions have been taken.

Out of a community of 60,000-70,000 in Iraq before 2003 only 5,000 remain. 85% of our community are either refugees or are seeking refuge, and are mainly in Syria and Jordan.

Mandaeans, like other religious minorities in Iraq, have not benefited from the recent supposed improvement in security. The killings, kidnappings, attacks, looting, and demands for ransom are continuing at an alarming rate, while the refugees, after years of living in the harshest of conditions, are still in limbo.

We, the undersigned, condemn these serious crimes, and demand the following:

1. that an independent investigation be undertaken urgently to look into these and all other atrocities against the Mandaeans;
2. that the Iraqi government act immediately to find the criminals, expose the organizations behind these crimes, and bring justice to the victims; April 21, 2009
3. that the Iraqi Government act to establish the Minorities Security Council under international observation which instates a system of protection for Mandaeans and all other Iraqi religious and ethnic minorities;
4. that the international community intervene according to international law and the United Nations Charter, to protect and secure the rights of the ethnic and religious minorities as well as the other indigenous peoples of Iraq. In particular we ask the international community to take immediate steps to stop the destruction of the Mandaean people and their culture, as well as find a collective durable solution to their desperate situation.

The Mandaeans as a people are in danger of extinction in their own homeland. They call out for your help. The international community must stand up and save the Mandaeans of Iraq. We ask you all to help us stop these grave atrocities and to bring peace and security to all native peoples of Iraq.

The Mandaean Associations Union The Mandaean Human Rights Group The Mandaean Crisis International

Report on the terror campaign against Mosul's Assyrians

Assyrian International News Agency (09.03.2009) / HRWF Int. (27.02.2009) – Email: info@hrwf.net – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> – Between the end of September and mid-October, 2008 over two thousand Christian families -- approximately 13,000 out of a total Christian population of roughly 25,000 people -- fled Iraq's second largest city, Mosul. They fled in response to a three-week, well-organized terror campaign targeting Christians. Terrorist acts included the murder of 13 Christians, the bombing of three homes, harassment, and the circulation of printed death threats. Mosul has been the scene of many acts of terrorism against Christians since the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003. The most highly publicized were the murder of Fr. Ragheed Ganni and four sub-deacons in 2007 and the kidnapping and subsequent death of Archbishop Paulous Faraj Rahho in March 2008. Mosul is Iraq's most violent city, and has become the center of the Islamic insurgency against the US-led Coalition Forces and the Iraqi Government. Since the United States launched "Operation Freedom Iraq" in 2003 to replace Saddam Hussein's dictatorship with a democracy, about 40% of Iraq's one million Christians have been forced to seek refuge abroad, while many of those who remain in Iraq are internally displaced. Iraq's Christian community is threatened with extinction.

The recent anti-Christian terror campaign in Mosul coincided with dangerously heightened tension between the Arab majority (40%) and the Kurdish minority (30%) in Nineveh Province and its capital city, Mosul. Kurds support the annexation of the Province to the neighboring autonomous region of Kurdistan. They are backed by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in Erbil. Arabs reject the KRG's claim on Nineveh. Both Arab and Kurds have powerful armed forces behind them, including organs of the state -- e.g. units of the national army and the police, and illegal militias and terrorist cells. Caught in the middle of this brutal tug-of-war are the small religious and ethnic minorities that have no armed forces to promote their interests. They are the Christian, Yezidi, and the Shabak communities. Together, these minorities hold an electoral balance of power and are therefore subjected to vigorous efforts by both Arabs and Kurds to use them politically for their purposes. The means of instrumentalization include violence and non-violent political action.

Christian Solidarity International

Full report available at <http://www.aina.org/reports/csitromc.pdf>

Christians Fleeing Persecution in Iraq

By Kenneth R. Timmerman

Assyrian International News Agency (26.02.2009) / HRWF Int. (27.02.2009) – Email: info@hrwf.net – Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> – Christians continue to flee Iraq because of religious persecution, even as some Iraqi church leaders are calling on their compatriots to return home.

The church leaders fear that Iraq will become emptied of Christians if the mass exodus continues, leading some of them to issue calls to return that have angered refugees.

"The Muslims of Daura are calling on Christians to come back," the Chaldean bishop of Baghdad, Monsignor Andraos Abouna, told Newsmax in an exclusive interview in Beirut this week.

The Daura neighborhood of Baghdad has been the scene of mass persecution of Christians since the U.S.-led liberation of Iraq in 2003. Churches have been fire-bombed,

homes torched, and Christians ordered by Muslim groups to leave their property and flee for their lives or convert to Islam.

Despite the pattern of Muslim violence, Bishop Abouna claimed that the security situation has changed dramatically, thanks to the surge in U.S. troop presence and the recent appearance in his neighborhood of Iraqi troops.

"At the beginning, it was utter chaos," he told Newsmax. "After the Americans came, there was no government, no army, no police. The borders were open. So whoever is strong can kill anyone."

Recently, however, the Iraqi government has allowed his diocese to hire private guards to protect the Baghdad churches. "They are all Christians, and they control access. The government pays for them. They are like ordinary police, but they are not in the police force."

Abouna says he hopes that as the recent refugees saw the security improvements, they would decide to come back. "We hope they will choose to do so."

While Abouna was visiting Lebanon, a priest from the Chaldean patriarchy in Lebanon delivered a tougher version of the same message to the faithful at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in the Boushriqeh neighborhood of Beirut, a slum where Iraqi Christians live crammed into tiny apartments they rent for \$200 per month.

"You must return to Iraq," he said on the Sunday before Lent. "You never should have come here. Priests died for Iraq. You should have stayed in Iraq," he said.

Rana Ramzi al-Sayigh, 30, is the mother of three small children. She is also the widow of a bodyguard who was murdered when Muslim terrorists attacked the convoy of a bishop, Farraj Rahho of Mosul, last February.

"I was angry when I heard [the message to return]. Everybody was angry," she tells Newsmax during a visit to her tiny apartment, not far from the church. "I have lost my husband. Does that priest want us all to become widows?"

She says that the Iraqi government gave her a widow's pension of \$85 per month, just enough to pay rent in a refugee housing complex, not enough for food. With three children to take care for, she could not work outside the home. "Is this priest saying that the church will support us?" she asks.

Rana counts herself among the lucky ones -- she had just learned that the U.S. authorities had approved her family's immigration visas. They were preparing to leave for the United States where she has an uncle in Detroit.

Majid Slaiwa Karomeh, 36, was less lucky. He fled to Beirut recently with his wife and their six small children, after being shot in the shoulder in September.

He and a brother worked as sewage truck drivers for Kellogg Brown Root, an American engineering company, in Baghdad. They were ambushed just as they were leaving a protected area.

Majid's brother was killed instantly.

A few days before he spoke to Newsmax in Beirut, thieves entered the small apartment where the family of eight was living and found the suitcase where he had hidden their life's savings -- around \$1,400.

He asked the local priests what he should do. They advised him not to report the theft to the authorities, because he was an illegal alien.

"If he reported the theft, we were afraid he could be arrested because he had overstayed his visa," said Michel Kasdano, an aid to Bishop Michel Kassarji, the Chaldean Bishop of Beirut.

To help Majid and his family get over their immediate crisis, the Bishop personally gave him some money, and told him to return in two days when the weekly meeting of the diocesan charity committee.

"I have 1,200 families to care for," Bishop Kassarji told Newsmax. "Some 6,000 souls. We have so few resources, but it is our job to do what we can."
