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## **Collateral damage? 63 churches hit in Syrian civil war**

### ***Government, opposition & Islamist forces accused of 'war crimes' in new report***

WWM (20.05.2015) - Sixty-three churches have been damaged or destroyed so far during four years of civil war in Syria, says the Syrian Network for Human Rights.

In a comprehensive 21-page report, first published in Arabic on 7 May and [now in English](#), the rights group, known for being anti-government, launches a withering attack on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's forces, claiming they were responsible for almost two thirds of the attacks.

The SNHR blames opposition forces for 14 and Islamic extremist groups for seven (ISIS, six; Al-Nusra Front, one). Two are unattributed; the remaining 40 are blamed on the "ruthless" al-Assad regime.

The report, '[Targeting Christian Places of Worship in Syria](#)', took five months to compile, says the SNHR, which claims it verified each of its photos and videos that were provided by locals or obtained from social media. However, the group acknowledges it "might not have been able to document all incidents".

Dr. Wael Aleji, spokesperson for SNHR, acknowledges in the report that war is often indiscriminate – "Christians and their places of worship have suffered as much as the rest of the Syrian people. Scud missiles, chemical weapons or barrel bombs do not differentiate between Christians and non-Christians".

However, both extremist groups and government and opposition forces are accused of committing war crimes through "deliberate targeting" of churches, and not just "random" attacks. All three are also accused of breaching international law by using churches as military bases.

In a report weighted heavily against the government, it should be noted that, although eye witnesses report one incident of government troops deliberately desecrating and burning a church in Kasab, a source contacted by World Watch Monitor claimed the responsibility lay with the al-Nusra Islamist group.

Meanwhile, it is only ISIS which is accused of hauling down crosses from the tops of churches and breaking them. ISIS is also accused of burning four churches to the ground and turning two others into bases. Both ISIS and the al-Nusra Front are accused of ransacking churches and destroying religious icons.

"After the rise and expansion of terrorist groups ... Christians have become trapped and squeezed between the fire of [the] Assad government and the hell of the extremist groups," says Aleji.

Despite consistent criticism of the al-Assad regime, the SNHR admits that "most of the targeted churches [by government forces] were located in opposition-controlled areas".

The government's reported "targeting" – sometimes "deliberate" – of churches also appears to have followed a fairly regular pattern: 40 churches in total, up from 19 in the [previous SNHR report](#) at the end of 2012.

The SNHR accuses each party of "random and sometimes deliberate" attacks. But it is unclear whether destruction caused by shelling or mortars is an unintended consequence of a brutal war, while the destroying of crosses and burning down of churches appears to be more deliberate.

In conclusion, the SNHR calls for the UN to "take further actions to ensure the safety of civilians" and "increase the pressure on countries supporting the government forces" – and the Kurdish Democratic Union Party. It calls for the "Syrian issue" to be referred to the International Criminal Court, and says that "all those who have committed crimes against humanity should be held accountable".

Finally, the SNHR asks for a "political solution" that would "bring peace and justice ... and save the lives of Syrian people and their heritage".

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## **Msgr. Zenari: prayers in Beirut and Damascus for kidnapped bishops and priests. Fears for their fate**

AsiaNews (20.04.2015) - <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Msgr.-Zenari:-prayers-in-Beirut-and-Damascus-for-kidnapped-bishops-and-priests.-Fears-for-their-fate-34020.html> - Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, jihadi militias and militant groups have kidnapped several leading Christian religious leaders, most notably two bishops - Metropolitan Boulos Yazigi (Orthodox Church of Antioch) and Metropolitan Mar Gregorios Youhanna Ibrahim (Syrian Orthodox Church) - taken in April 2013.

In addition to them, there is Jesuit Father Paolo Dall'Oglio, an Italian-born priest [kidnapped in Syria on 29 July 2013](#), and two other priests, along with several lay volunteers, including two Italian young women in their early twenties, [released in mid-January](#). Also last year, militants [kidnapped a group of 13 nuns north of Damascus](#), released a few months later in a prisoner exchange.

Yesterday two ecumenical prayer meetings were held in Syria and Lebanon for the release of kidnapped priests and bishops.

Addressing the faithful patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch Yohanna Yazigi, brother of one of the two kidnapped bishops, expressed his hope that "they are still alive", even though "the world remains silent" and "no one has provided tangible evidence" of their fate. "We have tried to negotiate with anyone who could help us in this matter - added the patriarch - but unfortunately there is total silence."

Speaking to *AsiaNews*, the apostolic nuncio in Syria confirms that the fate of the hostages, "is unknown". Yesterday, he adds, "we prayed in Damascus" but "the more time passes, the more a climate of distrust and fear increases among people".

Although the kidnappings took place over two years ago, the Vatican diplomat warns, "who can say that the door is closed" and there is no more hope of their release. "But I want to say - concludes Msgr. Zenari - that the bishops and Fr. Dall'Oglio are just the tip of the iceberg, because there are currently at least 20 thousand people missing, people of whom we know nothing. Right now we want to remember all of them. "

Since the beginning of the uprising against Syrian President Bashar al Assad in 2011, more than 3.2 million people have fled the country whilst another 7.6 million have become internally displaced.

At least 200,000 people have been killed in the fighting, many of them civilians. [Last year was the worse](#) in terms of casualties.

In the spring of 2013, the Islamic State group emerged out of the cauldron of Syria's civil war, in all its violence and brutality. From that point, it advanced rapidly, seizing large swathes of Syrian and Iraqi territory. (DS)

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## The Genocide of Assyrians that started in Iraq continues in Syria



AINA (27.02.2015) - On Tuesday, February 23 ISIS attacked 35 Assyrian villages on the Khabur river in the Hassaka province in northeast Syria (<http://www.aina.org/news/20150223174904.htm>). At least 9 Assyrians fighters were killed defending their villages. Up to 373 Assyrians were captured. 3000 Assyrians fled from their villages and are now in shelters in Hasaka and Qamishli.

None of the Assyrians want to return. This is what they have told their bishops.

Three weeks earlier, ISIS ordered Assyrians in the region of Hasaka to remove the crosses from their churches and to pay *jizya* (Christian poll tax), warning residents that if they failed to pay they would have to leave or else be killed (AINA: <http://www.aina.org/news/20150203164724.htm>).

The [list of atrocities](http://www.aina.org/releases/20150226225711.html) (<http://www.aina.org/releases/20150226225711.html>) against Assyrians in Syria is very long; it includes murders, kidnappings and the destruction of cultural resources, including churches and ancient Assyrian historical artifacts.

In Iraq it has been the same. With the first church bombing on June 24, 2004 there began a relentless, low grade genocide (Report: <http://www.aina.org/reports/ig.pdf>) which culminated in the displacement of 200,000 Assyrians from the Nineveh Plain by ISIS (Report: <http://www.aina.org/news/20140729115702.htm>). Where the population of Assyrians in Iraq was at 1.4 million in 2004, it has dwindled to 300,000 in 2015. Most

fled to Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey --and now these same refugees will be forced to flee from Syria, along with the Assyrians of Syria.

ISIS has not only killed and displaced Assyrians in Syria and Iraq, it has destroyed the Assyrian cultural heritage. It has destroyed 118 churches in Iraq (Report <http://www.aina.org/news/20080107163014.htm>) and 6 in Syria. It has destroyed Assyrian archaeological sites and historical artifacts in Iraq and Syria.

This is genocide -- there is no other word for it. This is the erasure of a nation from the land which it has inhabited for 6764 years.

Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide lays down the meaning of genocide:

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- Killing members of the group;
- Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

To this we can add the destruction of the cultural heritage of a nation, including the destruction of secular and religious institutions and historical and archaeological artifacts.

All of these acts have been committed against Assyrians in Syria and Iraq in the last ten years.

It is ironic that the ISIS attacks on Assyrians in Syria is occurring in 2015, the centennial anniversary of the 1915 Turkish genocide of Assyrians, Greeks and Armenians, in which 750,000 Assyrians were killed (75%), 500,000 Pontic Greeks and 1.5 million Armenians.

This is not a coincidence. ISIS is pretty savvy and is historically informed. When ISIS pushed into the Nineveh Plain in Iraq last year, forcing 200,000 Assyrians to flee their homes, they began their invasion on August 7, which is the official Assyrian Martyrs Day, a day on which each year Assyrians remember their fallen.

How should the civilized world react to this? When a group destroys a nation it destroys the cultural heritage of the civilized world. When the Taliban destroyed the 2,500 year-old Buddhist statues in Afghanistan, the civilized world lost. When ISIS destroyed the walls of Nineveh, the civilized world lost. When ISIS killed Yazidis, the civilized world lost. When ISIS killed Shiites the civilized world lost. When ISIS killed Assyrians the civilized world lost.

And now ISIS is destroying the very foundations of world civilization. It is in Mesopotamia where civilization as we know it began. Destroying Assyrian artifacts is ISIS's message to the world, that it aims to eradicate the very basis of its civilization because it is not Islamic.

There is no moral ambiguity in what is occurring -- ISIS is evil and the source of this evil is Islam.

The civilized world must find the courage to accept the force of its moral superiority and act on it. If it does not, the world will fall into shadow.

There is a dark veil falling on the world and it is Islam as embodied by ISIS. Who has the courage to lift this veil?

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## **72 Assyrian Christian families captured, 50 besieged by IS after Syria attack**

WWM (25.02.2015) - Sources from Syria's [embattled Hassaka province](#) confirmed at midnight on Tuesday, Feb. 24, that at least 72 Assyrian Christian families - thought to be around 200 people - from three villages have been captured by the self-proclaimed Islamic State. Reportedly taken to the Arab Sunni village of Um Al-Masamier, the exact number of Christian hostages from the Tel Gouran, Tel Jazira and Tel Hormizd villages remains unknown.

An additional 50 or more families are still under siege in Tel Shamiram village, surrounded by IS fighters. Although on Monday Kurdish fighters from Syria's Democratic Union Party (PYD) took back control of Toma Yelda, an important hill on the battlefield, the military struggle for Tel Shamiram is continuing.

According to Archbishop Mar Aprem Nathniel, the Bishop of Syria of the Assyrian Church of the East residing in Hassaka, only 200 Christian families remain in the Khabour region, more than 100 in Tel Tamar and the others in villages not yet taken over by IS.

He estimates 1,000 families who have fled from Khabour are now displaced in the cities of Hassaka to the south and Qamishli close to the Turkish border.

Calls from abroad to the mobile phones of some Assyrian villagers on Feb. 23 were answered by IS members, according to a posting on the Facebook page of A Demand for Action, an advocacy group for religious minorities in the Middle East. "They told us that we should not call any longer since we cannot do anything about their situation," said George Kasten, a Swedish caller trying to reach his relatives.

"IS members have been very clear with their demands," he said. "They want the Syrian Kurdish militias to release the IS hostages they are currently holding. IS members say that if they do not release the hostages, all men from the village will die."

IS has struck apparent exchange swaps in Iraq in the past year to release Turkish diplomats and truck drivers, after holding them hostage for months. But the gruesome propaganda video released from Libya earlier this month, showing the beheading of 21 Egyptian Christians, has underlined once again the jihadist group's clearcut anti-Christian agenda. On Monday, during the attack, a regional Kurdish news agency Rudaw reported that intercepted radio signals by IS referred to the capture of '56 Crusaders'.

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## **EP Intergroup calls on the European Union to focus on protecting religious or belief minorities in the MENA region**

Intergroup on FoRB &RT (25.02.2015) <http://www.religiousfreedom.eu/our-work/press-releases/> - The European Parliament Intergroup on FoRB and RT (Intergroup on FoRB &RT) condemns the attack on Christian villages and the abduction of Syrian Christians in Syria. Activists have claimed that ISIS has massacred a number of Christians, burned dozens of houses, torched churches and abducted men, women and children in a series of dawn raids in Northeast Syria. The attack on the Christian villages in Syria follows the murder of 21 Copts in Libya by ISIS last week.

Attacks against religious or belief minorities in the region have been rising over the past few years. They are regularly targeted and their villages have been destroyed by extremists, forcing many religious or belief minorities to leave the region. In particular the Intergroup is extremely worried about the numerous attacks on Christian communities whose presence in the region goes back centuries. Peter van Dalen Co-President of the Intergroup said: *'The latest attack by ISIS is another example of the desperate situation religious or belief minorities, in particular Christians, face in the region. It is a sad day when people are being attacked because of their religion or belief.'*

The Intergroup calls on the EU to increase political pressure in order to protect religious or belief minorities in the region. High/Representative Mogherini should call for an international investigation into the crimes committed by ISIS against minorities in the region. The High Representative/Vice President should also raise the subject of religious or belief minorities with international partners. Intergroup Co-President Dennis De Jong said *'This attack underscores the need for the EU and its international partners to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of minorities in the region.'*

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### **At least 90 abducted from Christian villages**

CSW (24.02.2015) - The Islamist jihadi group Daesh (Islamic State) has kidnapped at least 90 people from mainly Assyrian Christian villages in north east Syria.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), the kidnappings took place on 24 February, following dawn raids on Assyrian villages in areas held by Kurdish forces in al-Hasakah Province. The villages, mainly populated by the ancient Christian Minority, are near the Assyrian town of Tel Hmar. The nearby city of Hasakah is divided between Kurdish and Daesh forces.

On 22 February, fighters from the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) claimed that they had driven Daesh out of 22 villages, including several Assyrian ones situated between Hasakah City and Syria's border with Turkey. YPG forces also seized 19 villages during an offensive in Raqqa Province, which is next to Hassakeh. Daesh fighters countered by advancing into the Assyrian villages in an effort to regain control.

As well as abducting local Christians, the jihadi militants are also reported to have executed two people in the village of Ghibsh near Tal Tamer for "dealing with Kurds."

While there are currently no details on those who have been kidnapped, Christians living

in these areas had previously received an ultimatum to convert, pay a religious levy (Jizya) or face death, causing many to flee their ancestral lands.

Last week, Daesh fighters released a video reportedly showing the mass beheadings of 21 mostly Egyptian Christians on a beach outside the Libyan capital, Tripoli, which sparked an international outcry and led to [airstrikes](#) by Egyptian forces on weapons caches and training camps in the coastal cities of Derna and Sirte.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said: "This kidnapping is the latest appalling assault on these ancient Assyrian villages. Daesh was already inflicting terror and suffering in the region through systematic use of religious taxation, destroying Churches and capturing and killing anyone who does not share their beliefs. Syria is the cradle of world Christianity, which far from being a Western or alien religion, was birthed and is rooted in the Middle East. It is both tragic and an irony that members of this ancient, indigenous community continue to suffer at the hands of a mercenary army. Our prayers are with the family and friends of those who have been abducted and we would point the international community to this latest act of aggression as evidence of the need to provide protection for Syria's Christians against an onslaught that seeks to erase the country's diverse heritage."

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## **Syrian Kurdish militia arrests Assyrians, including a priest**

AINA (21.02.2015) -- Nearly 400 *Asayish* (Kurdish security) members of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party in Syria surrounded the Malikiyya neighborhood yesterday and arrested 10 Assyrians and Christians, including an Assyrian a priest, members of the Malikiyya Social Commission, a Christian group, and Assyrian members of the armed protection units of Malikiyya, in Hasaka.

The following individuals were arrested:

- Rev. Gabriel David, the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch's delegate
- Akhiqar Rashid, executive officer of the Mother Syria Assembly
- George Malkoun
- Farouk Hanna
- Aphram Danho
- Bassel Abel Ahad
- Sargon Al-Khoury, an official of the Malikiyya Protection Bureau belonging to the Assyrian Protection Units
- Abdel Ahad Adam (engineer)
- Alaa Abdel Ahad
- George Shammas

According to witnesses, those arrested were charged with trespassing into a "Kurdish area."

All were detained for 4 hours and then released, except for Alaa Abdel Ahad and George Shammas, who remain in custody. Rev. Gabriel refused to leave before the others were released as well.

The Democratic Union Party (Syrian PKK) announced in late 2013, the establishment of "Kurdish autonomy" in areas of northeast Syria, including Afrin and Ain Arab in the



province of Aleppo, as well as the city of Qamishli in Hasaka province, which borders Turkey and Iraq.

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## **Double-layered veils and despair ... women describe life under Isis**

The Guardian (17.01.2015) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/17/isis-orders-women-iraq-syria-veils-gloves> - Women living under Islamic State's control in Iraq and Syria are facing increasingly harsh restrictions on movement and dress, which are rigorously enforced by religious police and are leading to resentment and despair among moderate Muslims.

Residents of Mosul, Raqqa and Deir el-Zour have told the Guardian in interviews conducted by phone and Skype that women are forced to be accompanied by a male guardian, known as a *mahram*, at all times, and are compelled to wear double-layered veils, loose abayas and gloves.

Their testimonies follow [the publication](#) this month of an Isis "manifesto" to clarify the "realities of life and the hallowed existence of women in the Islamic State". It said that girls could be married from the age of nine, and that women should only leave the house in exceptional circumstances and should remain "hidden and veiled".

Sama Maher, 20, a resident of Raqqa who has been detained several times by Isis religious police, known as Hisbah, for violating Isis rules, said: "It is prohibited for a woman in Raqqa or Deir el-Zour to move anywhere outside without a *mahram*, a male guardian. It is a big problem as I do not have any, we are only five sisters."

Isis has closed universities in areas under its control, she added. "I had to quit my university studies in Aleppo because I'm not allowed to cross the checkpoints without a *mahram* and leave the city by myself like before."

Male guardians are subject to punishment if women are not complying with the prescribed dress code. In Mosul, Isis published a charter within weeks of taking control of the city, restricting women's movements and imposing dress requirements. [Women](#) were instructed to wear a Saudi-style black veil of two layers to conceal their eyes and a loose robe designed by Isis after it said some abayas revealed body outlines.

Many women initially objected to the Isis order but complied when they realised they could be beaten, humiliated and fined, and their husbands might be punished. Men are now forcing their wives and daughters to stay at home to avoid confrontations with Hisbah, which issues orders via the internet or by posting written statements at shops warning against violations of Islamic rules in the city.

"They forced women of all ages to wear a veil, even though the majority of the women in Mosul wear a hijab," paediatrician Maha Saleh, 36, said. "The Hisbah would hit a woman on her head with a stick if she was not wearing a veil."

"At the beginning, some female doctors refused to wear veils and went on a strike by staying at home. Hisbah took ambulances and went to their houses and brought them by force to the hospital. One of my colleagues was alone in her clinic in the hospital and thought it was all right to strip off her veil. All of a sudden, two Hisbah broke in her room and reproached her for not wearing the veil and warned her not to do that again."

In Raqqa, the Isis "capital" in Syria, women were initially ordered to wear a black abaya covering the entire body. Soon after, a command to wear a veil was issued, then a third ordered a shield on top of the abaya. Women are also instructed to wear only black, including gloves and shoes. Isis subsequently ordered women to hide their eyes, requiring a double-layered veil.

I was shocked to see that women in labour were denied access to the hospital unless they put veils on

Mosul resident Sabah Nadiem said: "I went once with my wife to one of the old souqs to do some shopping, and after a short while I lost her among the crowd. The problem was that all the women were wearing veils and it was hard to know who was my wife. I was utterly scared to make a mistake and go for the wrong woman. It would be a disaster to fall into Hisbah hands. I could not even use my mobile as the network was down." Nadiem said he called out his wife's name loudly in the souq until she heard him and they were reunited.

Hisbah patrols tour Isis-controlled cities to ensure that women and men are behaving in accordance with Islamic rules. If they spot a woman in the street not wearing a shield or gloves, sometimes they offer her "Islamic dress" with a pair of gloves and advise her not to go out again without them, or they take her to Hisbah headquarters and keep her there until her *mahram* arrives. The *mahram* may be fined or could be subjected to lashes.

Children are not exempt from strict dress codes. When schools opened in Mosul last October, Samar Hadi, a mother of five, sent her two daughters – Hala, six, and Tiba, seven, – to school without a hijab, as she had the year before.

"After two days, the headmistress told them that they all have to wear the hijab when they come to school. So I made them wear the hijab. Then an Isis order came to stipulate that only girls in 4th, 5th and 6th class in primary school have to wear hijab, not 1st and 2nd classes."

In Deir el-Zour in Syria, the rules for female pupils and students appear to be stricter. "Little girls in primary schools have to wear an abaya until the 4th class, when they have to wear a veil too," said Sali Issam, 15, a secondary school student. "Though all the teachers in girls' schools are female, neither students nor teachers are allowed to lift the veil of their faces inside the classroom."

Many families stopped sending their children to school after recent air strikes by the Syrian regime army, she added. "Families are scared of Hisbah and Assad's warplanes."

Women in labour in maternity hospitals in Mosul are forced to comply with dress codes. "When I was in labour, I went to the hospital wearing a veil though it was too hot. Isis Hisbah were at the front door of the hospital. I saw some women in labour who seemed to be in a panic and did not have time to wear a veil. I was shocked to see that they were denied access to the hospital unless they put veils on their faces," said Salah.

Women over the age of 45 are exempted from the order to wear the veil, but often find themselves in difficulty. On a routine trip to Mosul University where she teaches, Saleh shared a taxi with an older woman who was not wearing a veil. "The taxi driver turned to the woman and said: 'Why are not you wearing a veil?' She told him that Isis said the veil was imposed on women who are less than 45. The driver answered: 'I'm afraid if I have you in my car, Isis Hisbah will stop me at a checkpoint and fine me.'"

Buses are also stopped for passengers to be checked. If a woman is found without required dress or *mahram*, all passengers are forced to disembark and the bus is refused permission to proceed. "If Hisbah spot a woman without a *mahram* in a bus, the whole bus is evacuated and sent back because the driver accepted her," said Maher.

In Mosul, single women are not allowed to be the last passenger on a bus, alone with the driver. Women are forced to get off buses before their destination if there are no other passengers present. Bassma Adel, 35, who works in a bank, had to get off a bus to avoid being alone with the driver even though she was not near her home.

I was fined \$1,500 and got 10 lashes on the bottom of my feet

"I had to walk to my house though the distance was long in inclement weather. One of my male colleagues passed by his car and offered to give me a lift. We drove for a short distance before we were spotted by Hisbah. They asked us for a document that proves my colleague was a *mahram* to me. When we failed to do that, they reproached us for being together in the car and humiliated us and ordered me to step down."

Hospitals in Raqqa are almost empty of female doctors, according to residents. The few female nurses are forbidden from lifting their veils or wearing anything but Islamic dress. All woman visiting doctors must be accompanied by a *mahram*, who has to wait outside the clinic. If Hisbah discovers a man inside a clinic, he will be arrested. A woman is permitted to be checked by a male doctor but is not allowed to lift her veil during examination.

Recently Isis ordered all female hairdressers to be shut down in Mosul. Samah Nasir, 43, had her own hairdressing shop for more than nine years – the only source of income for her three children as her husband is ill and unable to work. "I decided to reopen my shop despite the Isis embargo because I had nothing to feed my children and pay for my husband's medications."

Shortly after, Hisbah broke in her house and took her and her husband to a sharia court. "The judge ruled that I should pay \$1,500 [£977] as a fine and get 10 lashes on the bottom of my feet in one of the rooms in the sharia court. I have not been in such a situation all my life." Now Nasir rarely leaves her house.

*All names have been changed.*

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## IS publishes Women's Manifesto

RFE/RL (05.02.2015) - <http://www.rferl.org/content/islamic-state-womens-manifesto/26832051.html> - A manifesto for women published by the Islamic State (IS) group has criticized Western attitudes to women, saying that this so-called "Western model" has failed, that a woman's place is in the home, and that Western women's fashions, like earrings, are the work of the devil.

The **manifesto**, titled Women of the Islamic State, was shared on the Internet on January 23 by the IS group's all-women unit, the Al-Khanssa Brigade. An English version of the manifesto was shared on February 5 by the Britain-based anti-extremism think tank the Quilliam Foundation. It focuses on women's daily lives and the role of women in an Islamic society and in the "caliphate" (the name given by the IS group to the areas under its control).

The overarching message of the manifesto is that women should be "sedentary" while men are characterized by "movement and flux."

Women of the Islamic State does not beat around the bush, but states unequivocally that a woman's "fundamental function" is "in the house with her husband and children."

According to the manifesto, the Western idea that women should be "liberated" from the home has been a failure. This model, which is "preferred by infidels in the West" is a falsehood, according to the IS group, because the Islamic "Prophetic tradition" says that women should not leave the home even for prayer.

"Verily God has ordained this sedentary existence for women, and it cannot be better in any way," the manifesto insists.

The manifesto offers some explanations as to why it is very difficult for women to work outside the home.

"They have 'monthly complications' and pregnancies and so on," the manifesto explains, adding that women also have "responsibilities to their husbands, sons and religion."

### ***Women, Know Your Limits!***

Women of the Islamic State also -- unsurprisingly -- criticizes what it says is the Western idea that women should obtain "worldly knowledge" with the aim of trying to "prove that her intelligence is greater than a man's."

However, the manifesto does not say that women should be illiterate, but that God intended them to learn to "read and write about their religion and fiqh [Islamic jurisprudence]."

Studying for university degrees in such useless disciplines as science and other "Western" inventions is clearly a step too far for women, according to the Islamic State treatise, which is scathing about women who "flit here and there to get degrees and so on" and who "study the brain cells of crows, grains of sand, and the arteries of fish!"

### ***Earrings and hair "shaved in some places and not others" are the Devil's work***

The Islamic State's manifesto on women also covers the important issue of women's fashion which, unsurprisingly, it condemns as the work of "Iblis" or the devil.

The manifesto conflates jewelry such as earrings with plastic surgery, claiming that the devil encourages vulnerable women to "spend huge amounts of money to change God's creation" including via surgery to alter "the nose, ear, chin and nails."

The devil, according to the manifesto, preys on women in "fashion shops and beauty salons," encouraging them to have "things dangling from ears" and "hair shaved in some places and not others."

### ***Unseen and Unheard***

The IS women's manifesto insists that women should not leave the home except in "exceptional circumstances" but says that women can wage jihad in cases where an enemy is attacking her country and there are not enough men to fight.

Women are also allowed to work as doctors or teachers, but only if they observe strict Shari'a Law.

Although women are permitted to go outside in these extreme cases, the manifesto reiterates that, under normal circumstances, women should be unseen and unheard.

"It is always preferable for a woman to remain hidden and veiled, to maintain society from behind this veil," the manifesto says.

It is "legitimate" for girls to be married at the age of nine, the manifesto adds, noting that their husbands should "not be more than twenty years old."

Even if they fail to attract a husband at nine, the manifesto points out that "most pure girls will be married by sixteen or seventeen."

The manifesto ends by detailing some of the horrors that women are forced to endure in Saudi Arabia, where "women are able to work alongside men in shops like banks, where they are not separated by even a thin sheet of paper."

Saudi women are also "allowed to appear in ID photographs," while in Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, "males and females are able to mingle in the hallways as if they were in an infidel country in Europe."

**HRWF Footnote:** The text of the Manifesto in English and analysis can be accessed at <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/women-of-the-islamic-state3.pdf>

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