

# Report

# Facing Annihilation

*Innocent Assyrian victims of an unfolding Genocide*



A report by the **Assyria Council of Europe (ACE)**  
14 August 2014

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction: Assyrians and other Iraqi Minorities.....	p. 3
2. The Situation in Mosul since 10 June 2014.....	p. 6
3. The Situation in the Nineveh Plain since 10 June 2014.....	p. 11
4. Gains by the “Islamic State” since the Beginning of August.....	p. 13
5. The Condition of Refugees and IDPs.....	p. 16
6. Conclusion: What is the Solution? .....	p. 19
7. Recommendations	
7.1. To the Government of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (KRG).....	p. 21
7.2. To the Governments of Iraq and the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.....	p. 21
7.3. To the Government of Turkey.....	p. 21
7.4. To the Governments of Turkey and the Gulf States.....	p. 22
7.5. To the UN Security Council.....	p. 22
7.6. To all Governments.....	p. 22
Appendix: The final ultimatum of the “Islamic State” to Mosul’s Christians.....	p. 23



*An “Islamic State” fighter in Mosul, with the ancient city of Nineveh in the background*

## 1. Introduction: Assyrians and other Iraqi Minorities

**Assyrians** constitute Iraq's indigenous Christian population. Close to two-thirds of them belong to the Chaldean Catholic Church, and roughly one-fifth belong to the Assyrian Church of the East. The rest belong to the Syriac Orthodox Church, Syriac Catholic Church, Ancient Church of the East, and various protestant denominations. They call themselves *Suraye*, which is descended from the ancient term *Assurayi*, denoting a citizen of the Assyrian Empire. They are descendants of the ancient peoples of Mesopotamia, speak Aramaic, and originate from and live mainly in northern Iraq, with communities also in Baghdad and Basrah, as well as adjoining parts of Turkey, Iran and Syria.

Assyrians were the victims of Iraq's first genocide in between 7 and 16 August 1933. The ten-day killing campaign conducted by Iraqi troops, under direct government command, resulted in the slaughter of around 3,000 innocent civilians in and around the town of Simel. It also led to the destruction of more than 60 settlements, the vast majority of which were never resettled. While the preamble of the Iraqi constitution mentions the persecution and massacre of every other ethnic and sectarian group in the country, this tragic episode of Iraqi history was left out of the new national narrative. Assyrians continued to suffer displacement from their villages in the northern governorates of Nineveh, Dohuk and Erbil throughout the period of conflict between Kurdish rebels and the central government between 1961 and 1988, losing scores of settlements. Amongst the 4,500 villages obliterated by the end of the Anfal campaign in 1988, for instance, more than 150 of them were Assyrian settlements containing more than 60 historical churches. Between 1991 and 2003, Assyrians were also among those in the country who were adversely affected by the government's policies of "Arabisation" and "Nationality Correction."

The Assyrians in Iraq currently number between 300,000 and 450,000. In 2003 their population was estimated at 1-1.5 million, and they now constitute a third of Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries. This has come about as a result of Assyrian churches, businesses and homes throughout Iraq becoming the target of coordinated attacks. Kidnappings, as well as verbal and written threats to convert to Islam, pay *jizyah* (an extortion tax imposed upon non-Muslims), leave the country or else suffer death, have also been commonplace. In February 2008, the Chaldean Catholic Archbishop of Mosul, Mar Paulus Faraj Rahho, was abducted and killed. Other priests and religious figures have also been murdered or kidnapped. In total, more than 413 Christians were killed between 10 April 2003 and 23 March 2012, and 46 churches were attacked or bombed, leaving 95 dead.

One consequence of the partial success of the U.S. military's "surge" in central and southern Iraq had been the heavy concentration of insurgents in Mosul, seen as the traditional Assyrian heartland. Despite dramatically lower levels of violence nationwide, Mosul and surrounding Nineveh Governorate remained one of Iraq's most violent areas, accounting for nearly a fifth of all civilian deaths in 2012 according to the Iraq Body Count monitoring group. At the local level as well, Nineveh Governorate was perceived to be failing in its security duties to guard and protect churches, convents, and monasteries with Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) authorities filling the security vacuum in the countryside. This has since led to an uneven system of patronage and intimidation, whereby the Kurds have tried to bring Assyrian religious and secular leaders to agree with the area's annexation by the KRG, under whose authority there have been many documented cases of discrimination and injustice against Assyrians.

Prior to the Iraq intervention, there were an estimated 130,000 Christians in Nineveh Governorate, with 35,000 in Mosul. By 2014 the number of Christians in the city had shrunk to less than a third of that, with only 10,000 remaining. After it was seized by ISIS on 10 June, however, this figure dropped to roughly 2-3,000 as the majority fled for their lives. Now there are only a handful of Assyrians remaining in the entire Nineveh Governorate, under the brutal rule of the “Islamic State” (“IS”). The overwhelming majority have sought refuge with other Assyrians in the Governorates of Dohuk, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Kirkuk and Baghdad.

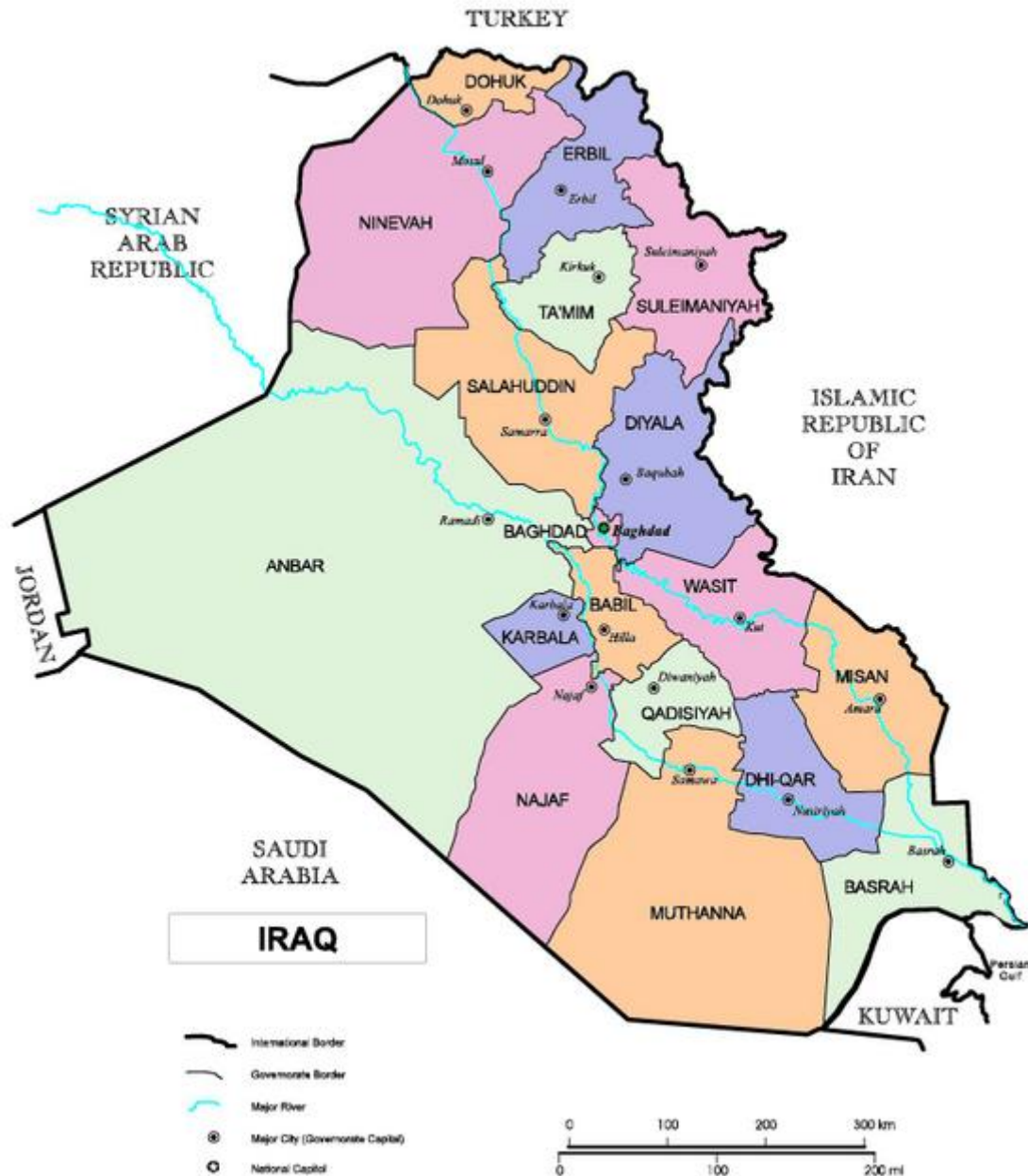
**Yazidis** practice a 4,000-year-old religion which focuses on *Malak Ta’us* (the ‘Peacock Angel’) as well as other deities. Their numbers have reportedly fallen from 700,000 in 2005 to approximately 500,000. Yazidis live mainly around Sinjar, with smaller communities in the Shaykhan district and in the cities of Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah. Much mystery surrounds their origins and ancestry, and they are also to be found in adjoining regions of Turkey and Syria. They include Kurdish as well as Arabic speakers, and their community tends to be off-limits to outsiders. Historically, the Yazidis have been subject to acute persecution by Islamic fanatics who have misconstrued their beliefs and practices as satanic. According to radical Islamic belief, their religion is not regarded as a “heavenly religion” and they are instead classified among the “unbelievers,” with have no rights under Islamic law. This has led to 72 distinct periods of massacre throughout the Yazidis’ history.

Since 2003, Yazidis have faced increased persecution. Islamist groups have declared them ‘impure’ and call for the death of all members of their community. Significantly, many Yazidis in Iraq also do not identify with the nation-building project of the Kurds, and prefer to consider themselves a separate ethnic group. Their reduced numbers are the result of targeted attacks and due to so many having fled into exile. A July 2008 report from Iraq’s Ministry of Human Rights stated that between 2003 and the end of 2007, a total of 335 Yazidis had been killed in direct or indirect attacks. Despite a general reduction of violence in Iraq, attacks against Yazidis have continued.

**Shabaks** are an ethno-cultural minority that have lived mainly in the Nineveh Plain, east of Mosul, since 1502. They number between 200,000 and 500,000, and are largely located in Mosul and some 35 towns and villages in the surrounding countryside. In 2003, there were about 60-70,000 Shabaks living in Mosul. By 2008 this number had been reduced to less than 10,000, with over 1,000 of them having been killed in the city. They are culturally distinct from Kurds and Arabs, have their own traditions, and speak a language called *Shabaki*. About 70 per cent are Shiite, whilst the rest are Sunni. They have been recognized as a distinct ethnic group in Iraq since 1952. Their status and lands are disputed, however, by both the Kurds and Arabs wishing to extend land claims into the Nineveh governorate. Like other minorities in this position Shabaks are suffering targeted persecution and assimilation. In 2005, two Assyrians were killed and four Shabaks were wounded when militiamen from the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) opened fire on a peaceful demonstration organised by the Democratic Shabak Coalition – a group which advocates separate representation for the Shabak community.

The **Turkmen** claim to be the third largest ethnic group in Iraq, with a history of settlement dating back to the seventh century AD. Apart from residing in the country’s major urban centres, a number of rural Turkmen communities are to be found in an arc of towns and villages in the north of the country, with concentrations in Tel-A‘far, Altun-Kopru, Kirkuk and Tuz-Khurmatu. Estimates of their population in Iraq before 2003 have ranged from

between 500,000 and 3 million. Approximately 60 per cent of Turkmen are Sunni, while the rest are Shiite. Although some have been able to preserve their distinct language, it has been reported that the Iraqi Turkmen today are rapidly being assimilated into the general Arab and Kurdish populations and are no longer tribally organised. Between 2003 and 2006, reports emerged of Kurdish oppression of Turkmen in Kirkuk and especially Tel-A‘far, where the campaign led to an estimated 1,350 dead, 2,650 wounded, 3,658 houses and 563 shops damaged, 500 houses completely demolished, 1,468 houses robbed, and 4,685 displaced families.



*A map of Iraq's governorates in 2013*

## 2. The Situation in Mosul since 10 June 2014

On 10 June 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) captured Mosul, briefly entering the nearby Assyrian town of Bakhdida (Qaraqosh), and the Monastery of Mar Behnam. Almost immediately after it had secured Mosul, ISIS began to target and drive out the Assyrians, in addition to Yazidis, all non-Sunni Muslim groups (including Shabaks and Turkmen), and even Kurds. Two days after their conquest, ISIS issued new Islamic rules for the city, based on *Shari'ah* law, as well as a decree ordering people to send them their unmarried women so that they could be used for sex by their fighters. Women were ordered to wear concealing clothes, cover themselves from head to toe, and only go out in the company of a male relative if needed. The husband of an Assyrian woman was abducted at an ISIS checkpoint and threatened with death if his wife did not don the Islamic veil. According to another report, four Christian women were shot and killed by ISIS members because they were not wearing veils.



*ISIS fighters parading in the streets of Mosul*

The High Commission for Human Rights in Iraq confirmed that, on 15 June, ISIS began imposing the *jizyah*, a poll tax, on Christian citizens in Mosul in an attempt to put pressure on them and displace them from the city. The minimum payment imposed was \$250, with the amount varying depending on the type of work or profession. They threatened to either kill or seize the property of those who refused to pay. The economic situation for Christians in Mosul, however, had become extremely difficult, with no financial resources or job opportunities except for vegetable shops – any other businesses had become non-existent. In one instance, ISIS members entered the home of an Assyrian family in Mosul and demanded the *jizya* from them. When they replied that they did not have the money, three ISIS members raped the mother and daughter in front of the father, who was so traumatized that he committed suicide.

On 21 June, Shiite Turkmen fled the surrounding villages of al-Kibbah and Shraykhan after receiving threats from ISIS. Additionally, ISIS arrested 25 men from the Turkmen village of al-Shamsiyat; their whereabouts is still unknown. That same day, ISIS ordered all Christian, Yazidi and Shiite government employees and civil servants not to report for work, effectively rendering them unemployed and cutting off their livelihoods. Women were also forcefully prevented from working, causing a halt in all financial and banking activity. This was followed by a significant rise in food prices, with fruit and vegetables becoming very scarce, and ISIS ordering that no ice blocks are to be sold.

On 26 June, ISIS began confiscating the homes of Christians and non-Sunni Muslims in Mosul. One refugee reported that ISIS members phoned him to say that his house had been confiscated for one of the “princes” of the militia. Soon it became clear that armed groups from ISIS had also seized the residency of the Chaldean Patriarchate, as well as other homes belonging to some of Mosul’s prominent Assyrians, using them as headquarters’ or as residences for their own families. They also rounded up Iraqi security agents, policemen and soldiers, asking them to declare their “repentance” and surrender their weapons and other military equipment. After having done so, all of the prisoners were tried and sentenced to death by execution, according to *Shari’ah*. Throughout this period, residents continued to leave Mosul with great difficulty in reaching safe areas.



*A new sign bearing the “IS” flag, welcoming people to the Wilayah of Nineveh*

On 29 June, ISIS changed its name to the “Islamic State” (“IS”), declaring itself a Caliphate. In the meantime, the growing scarcity of basic supplies and medicine, as well as severe electricity and water shortages, had become a threat to the general health and safety of the population. Furthermore, women and government employees from minority groups, who were supposed to receive their salaries for the month of June, were never paid. Just over a week later, all construction work in Mosul had come to a complete stop and construction workers were now unemployed as well. Around 8 July, the “IS” closed nearly all the city’s

barber shops and women’s salons. On 15 July, the “IS” ordered the remaining government workers to cease giving rations to Christians and Shiites in Mosul. Officials in charge of distributing rations were warned that if they provided Christians and Shiites with rations, then they would be charged and prosecuted according to *Shari‘ah*. At any rate, it had been decided to give citizens only three ration items, including flour, for the month of July.

On 17 July, after Christian leaders and their followers failed to present themselves to the Caliph as requested, the “IS” issued a statement ordering Christians in Mosul to either convert to Islam, pay the *jizyah*, or face the sword. They were allowed to evacuate themselves from the borders of the “Caliphate” by Saturday 19 July, at noon. The next day, the “IS” began to mark Christian homes in the city with the Arabic letter ‘n’ (for the word *Nasrani*, which means ‘Christian’), and Shiite homes with the letter ‘r’ (signifying the pejorative term *rawafid*, i.e. rejecters). These properties were additionally marked as “property of the Islamic State” and many cases have been reported of them having been looted since.



*A Christian house in Mosul marked with the Arabic letter ‘n’ in red, along with the note “Property of the Islamic State, N”*

In the intervening period, more than 200 Assyrian families responded by fleeing the city in a complete state of terror-stricken panic. To add insult to injury, the “IS” had setup checkpoints to rob and plunder them, taking money, cars, mobile phones, food, money, gold, fake jewellery, electronic items and even medicines. Over 85 families who had fled to Bakhdida reported being robbed of all of their possessions. Hundreds of Assyrians were forced to walk 70 kilometres to Tel-A‘far or Dohuk from Mosul, at night, after the “IS” confiscated their cars. They carried children on their backs and arrived exhausted and dehydrated. Some 20



Assyrian families remain stranded in the city, with at least five in the Dawasah neighbourhood. An additional 15 families subsequently converted to Islam to avoid losing their lives and wealth. In one instance, a young woman fled from her family in order to avoid conversion.



*The cathedral and headquarters of the Syriac Catholic Archdiocese, burn down by the “IS” on 18 July*

All 45 Christian institutions in Mosul (including churches, monasteries and cemeteries) have either been destroyed, occupied, converted to mosques, converted to “IS” centres or headquarters, or otherwise shuttered. Crosses have been removed from all of them and many of them have been burned or looted. The following are few examples:

- 10 June: An Armenian Apostolic church which was still under construction, in al-Wahdah neighbourhood. It was not a direct target, but collateral damage in an attack on nearby remnants of the Iraqi army.
- 11 June: The Chaldean Catholic church of the Holy Spirit was looted by ISIS members, who removed most of its electrical equipment.
- 21 June: Al-Tahira church (also known as *Our Lady of Tigris*), which dates back to the 7th century and was serving as the headquarters of the Chaldean Catholic Archdiocese of Mosul. There the statue of Virgin Mary was removed.
- 8 July: St. Ephraim Syriac Orthodox Cathedral, in the al-Shurta neighbourhood, was converted into a mosque by the “IS,” with loudspeakers installed for the call to prayer.

The cross on top of its dome was also removed. This all occurred one week after the church was seized by “IS” members on 1 July.

- 18 July: The cathedral and headquarters of the Syriac Catholic Archdiocese were looted and burned, after the destruction of statues of Christ and the Virgin Mary.
- 19 July: St. George Chaldean Catholic monastery, in Ba‘wera, was looted.
- 20 July: The 4th century Syriac Catholic monastery of Mar Behnam, near the ancient Assyrian city of Kalhu (Nimrud), was taken by “IS” fighters. They forced the monks to leave the monastery and flee on foot to Bakhdida leaving nothing behind.
- The old Syriac Catholic church of St. Thomas was looted after its doors were broken down.

In addition, and according to *Shari‘ah* law, Sunni, Shiite and Christian tombs and shrines have been destroyed. Among them are the historic tombs of the Prophets Jonah, Seth and Jirjis. Shiite mosques (*Husayniyah*) have also been demolished.



***The mosque and tomb of Nabi Yunus (Prophet Jonah), destroyed by the “IS” on 24 July***

In total, roughly 2,000 Christian families had been driven out of Mosul since 10 June 2014. For those who have remained in the city, there are severe shortages in electricity, drinking water, cooking gas and petrol. Officials, civil servants and women have not been receiving their salaries, forcing them to survive on their savings, and it is still unclear how long the “IS” will remain in control of what it has already taken by force. Military operations by the Iraqi government and Kurdish *peshmerga* fighters, in order to take back those areas, are expected, and people fear further loss of life in the ongoing conflict.

### 3. The Situation in the Nineveh Plain since 10 June 2014

After the fall of Mosul to ISIS on 10 June, many of what had previously been known as the “disputed areas” came under the direct control of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR). These included not only the Nineveh Plain, but also Kirkuk, Tuz-Khurmatu, Khaniqin, Sinjar and Tell-A‘far – areas populated largely by Iraqi minority groups such as the Assyrians, Yazidis, Shabak and Turkmen. While welcoming the protection of the Kurdish forces, Assyrians have nevertheless expressed grave concern about possible Kurdish annexation of their villages and towns. By 14 June, *peshmerga* forces had already raised Kurdish flags on government buildings and checkpoints in these areas, and had attempted to replace existing local officials with new ones loyal to the KRG.



#### ***Kurdish flags raised over the municipality building and entrance checkpoint of Alqosh***

On 30 June, six Assyrian students from the town of Alqosh were detained by armed members of the *Asayish* (Kurdish intelligence service). They were verbally and physically accosted, and were taken to the local *Asayish* headquarters where they were ordered to sit on their knees for several hours. They received death threats, beatings and torture before being released late in the night without their wallets and mobile phones. No reason was given to the students for their detention. Locals have since voiced their sentiment that this is a part of the Kurdish strategy to use the current turmoil in Iraq to occupy the Nineveh Plain and instil fear in the local non-Kurdish population, as well as to retaliate against the residents of Alqosh for thwarting their attempt to replace an Assyrian local council leader with a member of the KDP, two weeks earlier.

Meanwhile, neither the Iraqi government, nor *peshmerga* forces, were able to re-enter those areas which they lost to ISIS. This led to the aggravation of humanitarian conditions and continued flight of refugees to the IKR, Nineveh Plain and Kirkuk. People internally displaced by this conflict now number about a million. At this early state, however, an estimated 500,000 people (including more than 1,000 Assyrian families) fled their homes in Mosul, finding refuge in the Nineveh Plain, as well as the governorates of Erbil and Dohuk.

Following its takeover, ISIS cut off water and electricity to some parts of Mosul. The villages surrounding the city also lost their water service, which was provided by the purification plant there, with access only available for a few hours each day. This led to a full-blown

crisis in the Tel-Kayf, Hamdaniyah, Bartillah and Ba‘shiqah municipalities, whereby their inhabitants were buying water at exorbitant and unsustainable prices. Others were forced to dig wells, many of which had no purification system and were not suitable for drinking water. By 18 June, ISIS had severely limited the electric service to Tel-Kayf and Hamdaniyah districts to just one hour per day. The situation of the people displaced in the Nineveh Plain was further complicated by the fact that ISIS was preventing the delivery of government food rations to Tel-Kayf and other areas not under their control.

Initially, there were promises from KRG authorities to provide the area with limited services. These were not honoured. Petrol and cooking gas were becoming scarce, and the cost of basic materials skyrocketed. Villages and towns thus were rendered unable to use their own private generators for lack of fuel. The accumulation of waste in residential areas became significantly noticeable due to the fuel shortages since most sanitation employees were not working. This increased the possibility of the spread of epidemics. Monitors of this situation additionally noted a high frequency of anxiety, fear and frustration as a result of these circumstances. For these reasons, most humanitarian efforts were initially concentrated upon the Nineveh Plain.

The number of IDPs coming in from Mosul and Tel-A‘far increased daily as ISIS focused its attention on Bakhdida, inhabited by 50,000 Assyrians. Due to the skirmishes and random bombing resulting from fighting between ISIS and *peshmerga* forces, which began on the evening of 25 June, thousands of families from the Assyrian towns of Bakhdida, Bartillah and Karimlish fled desperately towards Erbil and Duhok. Initially, there were as many as 50,000 IDPs, with many more stranded in the village of Bardarash near ‘Aqrah. Taking advantage of this situation, ISIS systematically looted all Assyrian-owned poultry farms, looting USD\$8 million worth of livestock and equipment.

Meanwhile, there was a substantial increase in unemployment because of the suspension of commerce in the Nineveh Plain, as a result of the “IS” invasion. There was also a shortage in medical services, since medical workers, particularly Shabak and Turkmen, had fled or were fired by the “IS,” leaving only a few Christian doctors and medical staff. Throughout this period, tension continued between the “IS” and *peshmerga* forces, with the Kurds reinforcing their position on the western side of Bakhdida. On July 22, the “IS” and *peshmerga* fighters began to clash near the Assyrian town of Tel-Kayf (22 km north of Mosul) while, in the meantime, 80% of the inhabitants of Bakhdida had returned to their homes.

#### 4. Gains by the “Islamic State” since the Beginning of August

On 2 August, the “IS” captured the Yazidi towns of Sinjar and Zummar, along with the strategic town of Wana and the Mosul Dam, killing 2,000 Yazidis and causing 200,000 to flee for their lives into the nearby mountains without food and water. In the first two days of their ordeal, more than 50 Yazidi children and 50 of the elderly died from dehydration and illness. Some families were compelled to throw their children from the mountaintops so as not to see them die from hunger or thirst, or so that they would not be taken by the “IS”. As a result, the world leader of the Yazidis, Prince Tahseen Said, issued an urgent distress call. Hundreds more are still at risk despite the limited relief and rescue efforts that have recently taken place. According to one Iraqi General, 70% of the Yazidis on Mount Sinjar have died.



*“IS” fighters take the Syriac Orthodox Church in Sinjar on 2 August*

The fate of about 50 Assyrian families in Sinjar is still unknown. Fighters from the “IS” took control of the Syriac Orthodox church there and have covered the cross on its roof with their black banner. It has been estimated that at least 1,500 Yazidi men were killed in front of their wives and families and more than 70 girls and women (including both Yazidis and Christians) were taken, raped and are still being captured and sold. Suicides have occurred in Sinjar as a result of frustration, desperation and fear. One case has been confirmed of a girl committing suicide after she saw the “IS” kidnap four of her sisters from their home.

Additionally, the “IS” captured 500 Yazidi families and brought them to Tel-A‘far, where they are being held hostage and used as human shields. More than 100 of these families are still being detained at Tel-A‘far military airport, and the rest have been placed in schools and homes in the city’s the old fortress. Another 150 Yazidi families were deported to Syria for

unknown reasons, where they are being held at the al-Hol camp. Communication was lost with many displaced families that are still wandering in the wilderness and remote areas hoping to meet UN officials, especially after the batteries of their mobile phones were depleted.

The continuous shelling of Tel-Kayf by the “IS” led to the death, on 4 August, of one Assyrian, Lujain Hikmat Nano. He could not be buried there because of the danger, and was brought to Alqosh for burial instead. Prior to this, most families that had escaped would have left the odd family-member behind to protect their homes. This tragedy, however, and the threat it posed, caused fear and panic leading to a complete exodus not only from Tel-Kayf, but also from the Assyrian settlements of Batnaya, Mar-Oraha, Tel-Isqof and Baqopa. Arab Muslims also fled the area. The same occurred in the Shaykhan district, with the Assyrian villages of ‘Ayn-Baqrah, Karanjo, Pirozawa, Dashqotan and Garmawa emptying out as their destitute inhabitants fled for their lives. In the district centre, ‘Ayn-Sifni, the threat of “IS” forces having taken Mosul Falls (“Shallalat”), only 10-15 km away, led to an exodus first of Yazidi families and then of Assyrians.



*Assyrian IDPs from Mosul at the Monastery of Mar Matti*

In Ba‘shiqah and Bahzani, bombing and skirmishes between the invading forces of the “IS” and *peshmerga* fighters again led to the escape of the entire local Assyrian and Yazidi population. As a result, the nearby monastery of Mar Matti was evacuated of its inhabitants and IDPs. This was also the case for the villages in the valley below it, including Mergi, Magharah, Alfaf and al-Barakah.

At midnight on 6 August, a column of “IS” vehicles entered Tel-Kayf and took control of the abandoned town, continuing north to Batnaya and Tel-Isqof. In response, practically all the inhabitants of Alqosh also fled. That same night, *peshmerga* and “IS” forces again clashed 6 kilometres outside Bakhdida. Mortars fell on the city, killing one woman and two boys (aged 5 and 9), as well as injuring 5 other children. As a result, nearly all Assyrian residents of the city fled to Erbil. Their flight began at 2:00 am, when Kurdish forces announced they were withdrawing. The local bishops ordered all churches to ring their bells to warn the residents to flee. After the Kurdish forces withdrew the “IS” took control of the city and the surrounding areas, including Karimlish and Bartillah, robbing Assyrian as they fled. This exodus of over 200,000 people from the Nineveh Plain, over 3 days, was precipitated in part by the withdrawal of *peshmerga* forces. With no one left to defend them, Assyrians and others followed the retreating Kurds.

In Bakhdida, the “IS” rounded up 17 Assyrian families who had remained, bringing them to the Tawhid Mosque in the city’s al-‘Askari neighbourhood. There they offered them the option to convert to Islam, pay the *jizyah*, or accept death. The next evening these families escaped to ‘Ankawa. The “IS” also killed a young Assyrian man, Rami Hanna Shitte, and raided and destroyed all liquor stores. In Karimlish the “IS” robbed an elderly Assyrian couple who was late in fleeing, taking two million Iraqi Dinars (USD\$1,700) from them. The invaders are now using three homes and the KDP building as their bases. Homes have also been confiscated in Bakhdida and Tel-Kayf for the “princes” of the “IS.” The Assyrian towns of Tel-Isqof and Ba’shiqah were completely looted and plundered by the “IS” in broad daylight, with all homes having been emptied of valuables.

On 11 August, the “IS” asked the handful of Assyrians who had remained in Mosul and Bakhdida to tell their Christian friends and relatives that they had been “pardoned” and may return to their homes without fear. Calling the offer “preposterous,” Assyrian leaders asked how such an “amnesty” can be issued to law-abiding Iraqi citizens who are guiltless and faultless, saying that amnesty is usually issued for criminals and outlaws. At the moment, this crisis has led to the abandonment of more than 50 settlements in the Nineveh Plain north and east of Mosul. These include 28 Assyrian settlements, including towns, villages and monasteries, as well as 15 Shabak villages, seven Yazidi villages and one Armenian village, in addition to most hamlets. As early as 7 August, the Iraqi Parliament had passed a resolution recognising the actions of the “IS” in north Iraq as genocide and crimes against humanity, calling upon the international community to prosecute the “IS” and to hold responsible the states and institutions that support or finance their activities, as well as to establish a safe haven by an international resolution issued by the UN Security Council.

The “IS” continues to violate human rights in areas under its control. The number of women kidnapped by them is increasing on a daily basis. There are armed women with the “IS” whose duty is to inspect the faces of other girls and women, selecting and isolating the beautiful ones for sale or forced marriage to the “IS” fighters. There is no accurate information regarding the number of non-Sunni families that have stayed behind in these areas, though the number is thought to be low. Some refugees are still stuck in the far north of the Nineveh Plain, unable to enter the IKR. They have settled in small villages and groves and their condition is critical since they lack food, water and shelter. These people also suffer from the lack of basic services, as well as a shortage of medicines due to limited health care services available in these areas. Most of these refugees lack funds needed to purchase basic necessities.

## 5. The Condition of Refugees and IDPs

Since the first hours in which this catastrophe unfolded on 10 June, the AAS-I began to render aid to as many families as possible in the Nineveh Plain, alongside the Christian Solidarity International Commission, International Red Cross, Kana, Caritas and the Hammurabi Human Rights Organisation. This included humanitarian aid, largely in the form of food packages, drinking water and soft drinks. The number of IDPs was as follows:

Locations	Number of IDP Families (26 June) <sup>1</sup>	Number of IDP Families (23 July)
Bakhdida (Qaraqosh)	250	---
Alqosh and Sharafiyah	272	100
Karimlish	115	---
Bartillah	135	170
‘Ayn-Sifni	45	110
Pirozawa, ‘Ayn-Baqrah, Karanjo and Dashqotan	---	60
Tel-Kayf	65	900
Batnaya	87	120
Tel-Isqof	240	220
Ba‘shiqah, Bahzani and Mar Matti	130	250
Dohuk and Erbil Governorates	Erbil/‘Ankawa	150
	Dohuk Centre	350
	‘Aqrah and Nahla	200
	Zakho <sup>2</sup>	180
	Sapna District <sup>3</sup>	300
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1,689</b>	<b>3,110</b>

It was estimated that upwards of 500,000 people were displaced in total, when Mosul was initially seized by ISIS on 10 June. To this figure must be added at least 200,000 refugees from the Nineveh Plain, along with another 200,000 Yazidis and Turkmen from Sinjar, Zummar and Tel-A‘far, that have been driven out in the last two months. The total figure, therefore, of people currently displaced in the IKR, in Kurdish-held parts of Syria, and on the frontiers of the Nineveh Plain, is over 900,000. Of this number, Assyrians and other Christians account for up to 25%, Yazidis comprising another 25%, and the remainder including Shabak, Turkmen, Arabs and other small groups. Assyrians have fled to all three governorates of the IKR: Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah; as well as to Kirkuk, Baghdad and further south. This influx of refugees has overwhelmed the towns, leading to a shortage of all basic necessities, including shelter, food and water. Very little relief is reaching them and the aid being provided by human rights and charitable organisations is severely limited. Iraqi Kurdish officials have already begun orchestrating the construction of refugee camps in safe areas within their region.

<sup>1</sup> While Assyrian Christians represent 65-70% of these families, the figures also include people from other religious and ethnic groups.

<sup>2</sup> This figure includes the city of Zakho, as well as the villages of Bersive and Fayshkhabur.

<sup>3</sup> This figure includes the villages and towns of Mangesh, Sarsang, Badarrash, Aradin, Inishk, Bebad, Amediyah, Tin, Dawudiyah, Dehe, etc.



The first wave that reached the Assyrian town of ‘Ankawa, on the outskirts of Erbil, were put up in hotels, churches, social halls, athletic clubs, as well as the offices and headquarters of civil society organisations and political parties including the Assyrian Women’s Union, Chaldo-Assyrian Student and Youth Union, and Assyrian Democratic Movement. The conditions there have since worsened, since ‘Ankawa has sustained the greatest number of IDPs. Now there are not enough shelters to accommodate the second wave, with many sleeping in the gardens of the St. Joseph Chaldean Catholic Cathedral and Diocese headquarters, on sidewalks, in public parks, as well as in unfinished, abandoned and condemned buildings. Yet others are sleeping in streets and open fields on the outskirts of town. The Assyrian refugees, especially women, children and the elderly, have suffered from the scorching sun and extreme heat (40° C during the day), since the majority of them were forced to walk for tens of kilometres. They were terrified, and *peshmerga* forces manning the checkpoints harassed them as they entered. Thousands of them were stranded on the roads without food or water, with many handicapped and disabled people. For those fortunate to have cars, they are unable to find shelter and many are currently sleeping in their cars. Many of these IDPs have even fled as far as Shaqlawa, Rawanduz and Diyana.



***Refugees from the Nineveh Plain sleeping out in the open in an ‘Ankawa churchyard***

At the provincial level, however, Dohuk has received the majority of refugees, and the city is handling the influx a little better than ‘Ankawa. Some have taken shelter with their relatives, while many more have been accommodated in the headquarters of the AAS-I, student dormitories, church halls, mosques and other places. Most refugees have been sheltered in vacant homes in dozens of Assyrian villages – some as far north as the Barwari-Bala district,

on the border with Turkey.<sup>4</sup> Clergymen, village leaders and volunteers belonging to these villages have welcomed and helped to house thousands of families in these homes. They have assigned 3-4 families per house. School buildings were also declared open for use by the order of the provincial government and hundreds of families were sheltered in them. The living conditions for many of these refugees are miserable. In many cases there are more than 100 people are now living in a space that normally accommodates only 20 people. Most of those families are in a collapsed state. They are in severe need of the basic necessities of life (food, water, clothing, etc.). The most important thing, however, is housing, especially for those who are currently taking temporary shelter in schools, dormitories, civil society buildings, or with relatives.

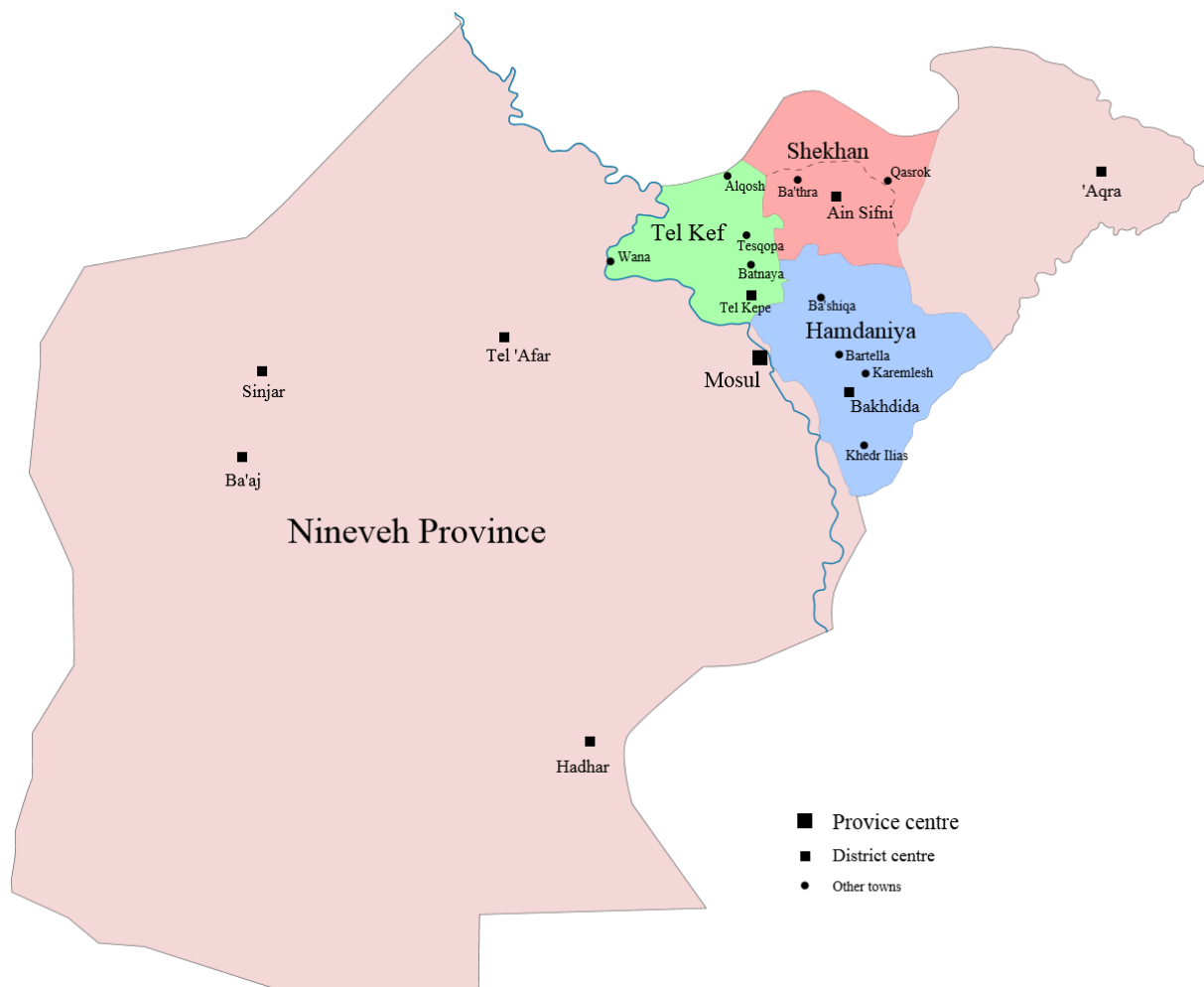
The situation of the refugees is past critical and is now a humanitarian crisis. Aid must be delivered immediately to prevent thousands of deaths. Water is the most critical component, as there is not enough for the needs of the tens of thousands of refugees, who have already begun using unpurified, stagnant and dirty water for washing as well as consumption. The threat of a cholera outbreak now looms large. According to a communication from an aid worker in Dohuk: “It is a tragic situation, nobody can imagine how terrible it is, as much as I write... it will not be enough to describe the suffering of people... we are all in a bad situation... one may cry to see those people in this situation.” Psychologically, these people are still suffering and there is great fear of the possibility that the “IS” will begin abducting women and enslaving or selling them, as had previously happened in Tal-A‘far and Sinjar. Some have travelled to the Iraqi-Turkish border crossing of Ibrahim al-Khalil (Habur), hoping to leave their country. A smaller number are attempting to leave via Erbil International Airport.

---

<sup>4</sup> Among the villages in Barwari-Bala now harbouring over 300 refugee families are ‘Ayn-Nune (Kani-Masi), Tashish and Challik. There are another 110 families being sheltered in Assyrian villages of the Simel district such as Sorka, Bakhitme, Shiyoz and Misurike.

## 6. Conclusion: What is the Solution?

So far, many possible solutions have been posited for the current situation of Assyrians in Iraq. Some have suggested resettlement in the IKR, whilst others have favoured the idea of Western countries allowing large numbers of them to immigrate and settle there. The first scenario would only be temporary, and runs contradictory to the obvious nation-building attempts of the ruling Kurdish political parties. With Assyrians in the IKR already suffering from this policy, and existing IDPs from elsewhere in Iraq having to obtain residence permits to remain there, resettlement of the new refugees from Nineveh is implausible. The second option would mean that Iraq has given up on maintaining its ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity. It would tear Assyrians and others from the social fabric of the country, and render them open to eventual assimilation and acculturation in the melting pots of the diaspora, with all the additional social problems that brings with it.



*The proposed boundaries of the Nineveh Plain Governorate, a possible safe haven for Assyrians and other Iraqi minorities*

A different solution, however, has already been implemented within Iraq – the creation of a UN-protected safe haven. This was brought about in order to protect Kurds and other minorities, who were suffering oppression and the threat of annihilation by Saddam's forces. Furthermore, on 21 January this year the Iraqi Parliament and Cabinet already agreed upon

the creation of new governorates in the Nineveh Plain, Tel-A‘far and Tuz-Khurmatu – and the possibility has even been raised in public circles regarding an additional governorate in Sinjar. Such new provinces would allow members of Iraq’s ultra-minorities, which have been sidelined in favour of the three major players (Shiites, Kurds and Sunnis), a chance at being represented and participating fully and fairly in the country’s political life. They would, of course, each need to have their own police, armed forces, infrastructure, civil society organisations, educational and university systems, fully integrated with their national counterparts, led by the central government in Baghdad. Such a model would also offer the opportunity for these groups to manage their own affairs on a local level and develop their unique linguistic and ethnic identities, for the first time in recent history.

Whilst Sinjar, for instance, would be a majority Yazidi governorate, Tuz-Khurmatu and Tel-A‘far would be majority Turkmen governorates. The Nineveh Plain, however, represents an area of Iraq where at least three of Iraq’s most endangered and heavily-persecuted groups – the Assyrians, Shabaks and Yazidis – could share in the governance of their own districts, as an integral part of Iraq. A governorate such as the Nineveh Plain, therefore, would provide a model of cooperation and coexistence which is at the heart of Iraqi identity, and will serve as a microcosm of Iraq’s diverse religions, languages and cultures.

For this to occur, however, certain steps need to be taken:

- The areas in question should be cleared from the “IS” and its fighters by means of targeted airstrikes and land attacks, restoring security and stability, and returning displaced people to their homes safely.
- The UN Security Council should issue an international resolution for the establishment of one or more safe havens for people from Iraq’s embattled minority groups and, if need be, send in UN peacekeeping forces to protect them and ensure that all refugees are restored to their homes safely.
- New Iraqi military and police units manned and commanded by local Assyrians, Yazidis, Shabak and Turkmen should be formed, trained and armed, in order to aid in the liberation and protection of their areas from threats such as the “IS”.

This is not an unrealistic scenario and has been implemented, to some extent, in the following cases:

- In 1991, as already mentioned, for the Kurds in Iraq after the Anfal Campaign and First Gulf War,
- In 1993 for Bosnian Muslims escaping genocide,
- In 1999 for Albanians in Kosovo escaping persecution,
- In 2011 for the oppressed South Sudanese,
- In 2013 for the refugees in Mali (Africa).

A safe haven for the Assyrians and other groups in the Nineveh Plain Governorate, therefore, is necessary in order to protect them from the ensuing genocide currently being perpetrated against them under the “IS”. This current situation of flight and displacement needs to be temporary and cannot be allowed to continue; otherwise it will have grave implications for the demography and diversity not only of Iraq, but also of the entire Middle East.

## 7. Recommendations

### 7.1. TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE IRAQI KURDISTAN REGION (KRG)

- Investigate cases of intimidation and human rights abuses of Assyrians by members of the *Asayish* and *peshmerga* forces, and prosecute the perpetrators.
- Disband the illegal and unconstitutional “Christian” militia groups that are funded by the KRG in the Nineveh Plain, and allow them to join the proposed Assyrian units of the Iraqi military.
- Stop trying to expand KRG territory and respect the right of indigenous minorities, such as Assyrians, Turkmen, Yazidis and Shabak, to govern themselves and administer their own ethnic and local affairs within Iraq.

### 7.2. TO THE GOVERNMENTS OF IRAQ AND THE IRAQI KURDISTAN REGION

- Designate as disaster areas the towns and districts of Sinjar, Bakhdida (Qaraqosh/Hamdaniyah), Bartillah, Ba’shiqah, Tel-Kayf, Alqosh, Shaykhan, Tal-A‘far, Tuz, Amerli, Bashir and Taza.
- Deliver urgent humanitarian aid to displaced people from those areas by all available means.
- Promptly allocate sums of money from the emergency budget for the purpose of securing the humanitarian needs of the residents of those areas, compensating the homeless and displaced people for damages.
- Allow the formation, training and armament of new Iraqi military and police units manned and commanded by Assyrians, Yazidis, Shabak and Turkmen, to aid in the liberation of their areas from the “IS”.
- Clear the areas from the “IS” and its fighters, restore security and stability, and return the displaced people to their homes safely.
- Implement the agreement, made by Iraqi Parliament and Cabinet on 21 January 2014, to create new provinces not only in areas where the existence of minority groups is under threat, such as the Nineveh Plain, Tel-A‘far, Tuz-Khurmatu, but also in Sinjar.
- Stop regarding the Assyrians (including Chaldeans and Syriacs) as a religious minority, and refrain from calling them Christians. They are the oldest inhabitants of Iraq and, as such, they should have the same rights enjoyed by the Arabs, Kurds and others in the country.

### 7.3. TO THE GOVERNMENT OF TURKEY

- Investigate and prosecute members of the “IS” suspected of committing, being complicit in or having command responsibility for war crimes in Iraq or Syria.
- Prevent the entry of fighters and arms flows to “IS” forces in Iraq and Syria, as well as to other armed groups believed to be responsible for committing war crimes there.

#### **7.4. TO THE GOVERNMENTS OF TURKEY AND THE GULF STATES**

- Publicly renounce the provision of any financial or material support, including arms transfers, to the “IS” and all other armed groups alleged to be responsible for committing war crimes or grave human rights abuses in Iraq and Syria.
- Take effective measures to prevent the transfer of financial or material support to the “IS” and other armed groups alleged to be committing war crimes and serious human rights abuses in Syria.

#### **7.5. TO THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL**

- Designate the acts perpetrated by the “IS” against Assyrians, Yazidis, Shabak and Turkmen in north Iraq as crimes against humanity, denounce them as genocide, and demand the prosecution of the perpetrators.
- Issue an international resolution for the establishment of one or more safe havens for people from Iraq’s embattled minority groups and, if need be, send in UN peacekeeping forces to protect them and ensure that refugees are restored to their homes safely.
- Demand that UN-affiliated humanitarian organisations work hard for the relief of the displaced people now in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, according to the UN Charter.
- Refer the situation in Iraq and Syria to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.
- Call on states to suspend arms transfers to the “IS” and other armed groups implicated in the commission of war crimes and serious human rights abuses.
- Hold responsible the states and institutions that support or finance the activities of the “IS”.

#### **7.6. TO ALL GOVERNMENTS**

- Provide all means of support, including immediate shipments of food, water, tents and other emergency relief aid to agencies coping with the current humanitarian crisis in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.
- Accept a shared responsibility to investigate and prosecute war crimes and other crimes under international law committed in Iraq and Syria. In particular, seek to exercise universal jurisdiction over these crimes before national courts in fair trials.
- As part of this shared responsibility, establish joint international investigation and prosecution teams to investigate crimes under international law committed in Iraq and Syria to improve the effectiveness of investigation, improve the chances of arrest and co-ordinate prosecutions.
- Hold responsible the states and institutions that support or finance the activities of the “IS”.

**APPENDIX:****The final ultimatum of the “Islamic State” to Mosul’s Christians**

On 17 July 2014, the “IS” issued an ultimatum to all Christians in Mosul that they must convert to Islam, pay the *jizyah*, or face the sword. They also gave noon on 19 July as the deadline to comply with its demands. Most of Mosul’s Assyrians responded by fleeing the city. Here is the text of the statement by “IS,” as well as a photograph of it:

“IS” Flag	In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful	Number: 10 Date: 19 Ramadan 1435 A.H. 17 / 7 / 2014 A.D.
-----------	--	--

**Islamic State  
Office of the Judiciary**

**Declaration**

Praise be to Allah who has glorified Islam with its victory, humiliator of polytheism through its conquest, and renderer of days into judgment through its justice; prayers and peace be upon whoever Allah lifted the illumination of Islam with his sword, and hereafter:

Almighty Allah says: “And when a community among them said: ‘Why do you preach to a people whom Allah is about to destroy or to punish with a severe torment?’ [The preachers] said: ‘In order to be free from guilt before your Lord [Allah], and perhaps they may fear Allah.’” al-A‘raf (163) [*sic*].

After the heads of the Christians and their children were notified of the date to attend in order to demonstrate their presence under the polity of the Caliphate, in the *Wilayah* [State] of Nineveh, they turned away and failed to attend at the time which was appointed and of which they were notified in advance, so it was decided that we offer them one of the three:

1. Islam [submission, i.e. to become Muslim].
2. *Dhimmi* status (which means taking *jizyah* from them).
3. If they refuse that, then there is nothing for them but the sword.

The Prince of the Faithful Caliph Ibrahim – may Allah glorify him – has privileged them by allowing them to evacuate themselves only from the borders of the polity of the Caliphate at the latest by Saturday 21 Ramadan 1435 [19 July 2014] at 12:00 pm, and after this date, there is nothing between us and them but the sword.

“Glory to Allah, his Prophet and the believers, but the hypocrites do not know.”

*Wilayah* of Nineveh  
Office of the Judiciary



بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الدولة الإسلامية

ديوان القضاء

عدد: ٤٠

التاريخ: ١٩ / رمضان / ١٤٣٥ هـ

٢٠١٥ / ٥ / ٢٧

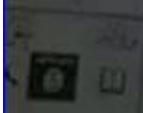
بيان

الحمد لله معز الإسلام بنصره، ومذل الشرك بجهده، وجاعل الأيام توباً بعبده، والصلاة والسلام على من رفع الله منزل الإسلام بسيفه، ويعد :

يقول الله تعالى : " وَإِذْ قَالَتْ أُمَّةٌ مِّنْهُمْ لِمَ تَعْبُدُونَ قَوْمًا لَّا يَمْلِكُونَ لَكُمْ شَيْئًا وَعَلَيْكُمْ كُفْرًا قَالَوا مَغْفِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ " الأعراف (١٦٣) .

فبعد إبلاغ رؤوس التصاري وأتباعهم بموعد الحضور لبيان حالهم في ظل دولة الخلافة في ولاية نينوى أعرضوا وتخلفوا عن الحضور في الموعد المحدد والمُبلَّغ إليهم سلفاً، وكان من المقرر أن نعرض عليهم إحدى ثلاث :

- ١- الإسلام .
  - ٢- عهد النمة ( وهو أخذ الجزية منهم ) .
  - ٣- فإن هم أبوا ذلك فليس لهم إلا السيف .
- وقد من طوبى أمير المؤمنين الخليفة إبراهيم \_ أعزه الله \_ بالسماح لهم بالجداء بأنفسهم فقط من حدود دولة الخلافة لموعد آخره يوم السبت الموافق ١٩ رمضان ١٤٣٥ الساعة الثانية عشر ظهراً، وبعد هذا الموعد ليس بيننا وبينهم إلا السيف .
- (( والله العزة وأرسوله والمؤمنين ولكن المنافقين لا يعلمون ))



ديوان القضاء  
ولاية نينوى