

Christians Fleeing Iraq After 14 Car Bombs Kill 63

A series of strategically-planned car bombs claimed the lives of 63 people in Baghdad, leaving many wondering about the security of the nation. With American troops now out of Iraq, many fear sectarian violence could erupt into civil war.

Greg Mussleman with Voice of the Martyrs, Canada recently returned from Iraq where he met with Christians. "Their fear was that this was going to happen," he shares. "I think around the world, this was the fear that as soon as the Americans left, al-Qaida [activity] and those that have their agenda would increase—terrorists wanting to make Iraq what they want it to be. They were just waiting for the American troops to leave."

Mussleman believes this is just the beginning of increasing amounts of violence.

While many reports indicate things are better in Iraq, Mussleman doesn't expect that to be the case in Baghdad, Mosul and Basra.

Many Christians left these cities for safer areas. "There's a fear for those who left Baghdad, Mosul, and some of those other hostile places, going to the north where it's been relatively secure," says Musselman. "Now there's concern that the violence will even increase in what has, in the last number of years, been relatively safe compared to the rest of the country."

The Christian church has been decimated during the Iraq conflict. Mussleman says, "Half to two-thirds of the Iraqi church have left the country. The pastor we talked to said no matter what happens, he's not leaving. And he's hoping his brothers and sisters will stay. To leave and not have a

witness for Christ, the salt and light, would be tragic.”

Christians aren’t the only ones being attacked. Other Muslims who don’t agree with al-Qaida are also in the crosshairs.

Could Iraq descend into civil war? “There are those who are motivated to turn Iraq into a [radical] Islamic nation [with] Shariah law. It could descend into that,” Mussleman says. “We certainly pray that it doesn’t, but it certainly has all the signs for that at this point.”

VOM Canada just returned from distributing 4,000 Christmas Blessing Packages, “which included blankets and Bibles -we worked with the United Bible Society of Iraq. We brought food supplies and those kinds of things.”

It’s a desperate situation for Christians, and they are telling Mussleman, “We have hope—eternal hope in Christ, but we have no future.”

Pray for believers in Iraq that God will protect them, help them be a strong witness, and give them courage to stay.