

Christians on Endangered Species List in Iraq

The centuries-old Christian community in Iraq is on the verge of extinction, according to Open Doors, an organization that fights for Christian freedom in dangerous countries.

The estimated number of Christians in Iraq has been cut in half from about 700,000 in 2003 to a mere 350,000 today. Open Doors reports that thousands of Christians have fled the country while others have taken refuge in northern Iraq.

“The religicide of Christians holds disturbing parallels to a previous effort to eliminate Iraqi Jews in 1941,” says Open Doors USA President Carl Moeller. “Many Jews fled and today virtually nothing remains of the once-vibrant community. People of all faiths must unite to prevent this from happening again. We must fight for freedom of religion for all imperiled faith groups in Iraq.”

In the last two months alone, between 70 and 80 Christians have been targeted and killed by Muslim extremists, including the massacre of 58 at Our Lady of Salvation Church in Baghdad on Oct. 31.

“The Christians in the Middle East, including Iraq, have become the new Jews of our times,” says Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein, director of Interfaith Affairs for the Simon Wiesenthal Center. “We call on all people of faith, and all Americans, to speak up for the embattled Christians of Iraq and against the disturbing pattern of violence against other faiths and places of worship.”