

Hundreds of Christian Families Flee Iraq After Anti-Christian Killings

A mass exodus is underway from Iraq's second largest city, Mosul, after its seizure by the ISIS, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, an Iraq and Syria-based Sunni Muslim extremist group.

The BBC reports about 150,000 people have fled the city—population about 1.8 million. World Watch Monitor can confirm that up to a thousand Christian families have fled, for safer areas.

ISIS has been able to take military advantage of a political power vacuum as Iraq's Prime Minister Nouri Maliki struggles to form a government after recent elections. ISIS wants to overthrow the Iraqi and Syrian Governments and establish a Sunni Muslim Caliphate in the Middle East.

It has been exercising informal control of Nineveh province, where Mosul is situated, for months. The Iraqi Parliament has declared a State of Emergency. The prime minister called for the Iraqi people to volunteer, and take up arms to defend the country. He also called on international organizations to support Iraq in maintaining peace, and on neighbouring countries to protect their boundaries, and not let "terrorists" enter Iraq.

Last Friday, an estimated 3,000 fighters of ISIS entered Mosul. They killed many people, including 21 policemen. Local security forces fled from these attackers. According to sources on the ground in Mosul, army and police personnel took off their uniforms so as not to be identified.

ISIS now controls the airport in Mosul; taking its guns and

some helicopters. Militants are said to be robbing and stealing in schools and banks; they have burned down several buildings and destroyed others.

Local media say militants took 70 female students hostage at the University of Mosul, and took 28 Turkish truck drivers hostage in the city. About 3,000 prisoners were reported to have been freed from the main jails.

One Mosul citizen reported “No water, electricity or food in the houses now” and “It is dangerous to go out as there is random sniper shooting in the city.”

Several sources in mainly Christian areas have confirmed that militants have entered their villages too. A local Christian reports that ISIS extremists are now in control of a well-known “Christian” village in Qara Qosh, where the guards ran away. Another Christian declared that ISIS militants also entered the Mar Behnam Monastery.

Some 200 families, many Christian, are now hosted at the Mar Mattai Monastery and about 50 families an hour are thought to be arriving in Al Qosh, 45km from Mosul, where there is another Monastery. Others have fled as far as Dohuk, 80km from Mosul.

Several schools in mainly Christian villages also opened their doors. New arrivals are desperate for mattresses and blankets, having left carrying only a plastic bag with a few clothes. Some said they had to leave their cars behind at check points and walk for many hours to safer regions.

“When this goes on like this, Mosul soon will be emptied of Christians,” said World Watch Monitor’s source in Iraq, who will remain unnamed for security. “This could be the last migration of Christians from Mosul.”

“Christian families are terrified,” one declared. A Christian man in Mosul said during a phone call: “I was able to make my

wife and children leave Mosul, but now I am stuck in the house and can't move."

An elderly woman and her adult daughter are still in their house in Mosul. They posted on social media: "God, please save us and Mosul." They said only they and one other family are left in their neighbourhood, all others have escaped.

The crisis worries many Christians in the neighboring Northern Kurdish part of Iraq. "We are praying for safety in Kurdistan," one said.

One Syrian refugee woman working in Erbil, an hour's drive from Mosul, told World Watch Monitor, "What is happening in Mosul now can badly affect our stay as refugees here in Kurdistan, as some ISIS militia come from Syria ... but I hope this will make the UN work more on our papers for emigration and allow us to travel abroad as soon as possible; we applied to migrate to Europe."