

Iraqi Christian Exodus from Mosul Continues

Mosul is now one of the most violent cities in Iraq with Christians and other minorities often targets of the violence.

As a result, thousands of Christians have left the Iraqi city since 2003 when U.S. forces deposed Saddam Hussein. The war triggered a wave of continuous violence in the second largest city in Iraq.

Before 2003, Mosul was home to 75,000 Christians. Approximately 70 percent belonged to the Chaldean Church, while the rest were Syriac Orthodox and Catholic. Now approximately 25,000 Christians live in Mosul, which has a population of 2 million. Many more Christians live in the surrounding Nineveh province.

Carl Moeller, Open Doors USA president and CEO, labels the attacks against Christians in Mosul and all of Iraq as “religicide.”

“Christians in cities like Baghdad and Mosul are gripped by terrorism. They are fleeing in droves,” Moeller says. “Today it was reported that at least 20 people died in blasts and shootings across the country.

“With the spotlight currently on Syria, Nigeria and Afghanistan and the pullout of U.S. troops from Iraq last December, Iraq has been placed on the back-burner. But we as Christians in the West must continue to pray for our brothers and sisters in Iraq, who face extinction if we don’t pray and advocate for them.”

Almost no day passes without someone being killed by bombs or bullets in the city, which is the capital of Nineveh province. The violence targets Christians but also policemen, soldiers

or officials working for the government. In the midst of all this, it's not difficult to find examples of growing hostility towards Christians.

In May, for example, it was reported that 20 families living in Mosul received threatening letters. The letters said that they had to move out of Mosul or face possible violence or kidnapping.

"A Mosul Christian said terrorists in Mosul visited four real estate agents, asking the names of Christians who recently sold their houses. With this information, they know who has money and might be possible targets for kidnappings. "One of the agents refused to give information to the terrorists and was killed," a spokesman for Open Doors said.

Also in Mosul, the house of a Christian was set on fire, and the police dismantled a bomb placed in the car of another Christian.

"Between 2005 and 2011 our operational command recorded the assassination of about 69 Christians, including university students, priests, female employees and housewives," says General Ahmed M. Aljaboury, director general of the Mosul police.

Two waves of killings and intimidation in 2008 and 2010 sent Christians fleeing from Mosul in such haste that the United Nations had to arrange emergency assistance. Many Christians have fled to Turkey, Jordan, Europe and the United States.

Before the Gulf War in 1991, the number of Christians in Iraq, ranked No. 9 on the Open Doors 2012 World Watch List of the worst persecutors of Christians, was estimated over 1 million. That number fell to an estimated 850,000 in 2003. Since then the numbers have plummeted. Open Doors estimates the number of Christians remaining in Iraq at 345,000. However, the number decreases every month.