

Persecution of Mosul Christians 'Unprecedented in Modern Times'

David Curry, president/CEO of Open Doors USA, has condemned the latest action of Islamic State militants who ordered all Christians in the Iraqi city of Mosul to leave the city over the weekend or face execution.

"The persecution and treatment of Christians in Mosul is unprecedented in modern times," he says. "This latest forced exodus of Christians further shows why Western governments and the people in the West need to cry out in support for religious freedom in the Middle East and elsewhere. If this does not move us concerning the near extinction of Christianity in the Middle East, it's likely nothing else can."

Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein, director of Interfaith Affairs at the Simon Wiesenthal Center, adds: "Too many of us thought that forced conversions and expulsions of entire religious communities were part of a distant, medieval past. There was little that we could do to stop this horrible episode."

"It is not too late to realize that many others—Christians today, but certainly Jews, Baha'i, Hindus, Muslims and others—are mortally endangered by a potent religious fanaticism that threatens tens of millions, and which still can be resisted."

According to Open Doors, the Islamic State gave Christians an ultimatum over the weekend: 1) Stay and convert to Islam; 2) Pay Islamic tax (which is too much for most families to pay); 3) Leave Mosul taking nothing but their clothes. Christians who stayed would be executed.

Most Christians have left Mosul now. At the checkpoints of ISIS, Christians had to leave everything behind (cars, gold, money, mobile phones). The only possessions they could keep were their clothes. They had to walk to safer places, mostly in northern Iraq, while traveling in blistering heat.

A World Watch Monitor source in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan region, said a Christian family in Mosul reported by phone that explosions were heard during the night last Thursday in Mosul. On Friday, as the family attempted to pass through a Mosul checkpoint, ISIS agents forced them out of their car and confiscated their belongings and put them in a separate vehicle. Then the militants drove them several minutes down the road, and ultimately forced them out to continue their journey on foot, according to the source.

Open Doors reports that some churches, many in partnership with Open Doors, have been helping the Mosul refugees. One Open Doors field worker said: "The exodus has stopped. There are no more Christians in Mosul anymore. We now need to pray that they might return one day."

Earlier last week, the Islamic State marked houses belonging to members of minority communities, including Christians, with the phrase "property of the Islamic State," including inhabited houses.

Iraq is ranked No. 4 on the Open Doors 2014 World Watch List of the worst persecutors of Christians. For more information on the list, [click here](#).