

Christmas Miracle: Iraq Officially Declares Christmas a National Holiday to Celebrate Birth of Jesus

Call it a Christmas miracle: Iraq, a predominantly Muslim nation, declared Dec. 25 to be a national holiday to celebrated “on the occasion of the birth of Jesus Christ.”

The official Twitter account for the Iraqi government released multiple statements and clips discussing the move and the role of Christians in the Middle Eastern country.

We extend our warmest wishes to Christians in Iraq and around the world for a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

– Government of Iraq – *Ø\$Ù,,ØÙfÙ^Ù...Ø© Ø\$Ù,,Ø¹Ø±Ø\$Ù,ÙŠØ© (@IraqiGovt) December 25, 2018*

On Christmas Eve, PM @AdilAbdAlMahdi met with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican Secretary of State, and his delegation and reaffirmed that Iraqi Christians are an integral part of Iraq’s national community.

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The Cabinet holds its weekly meeting in Baghdad. Find out more here:

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Open Doors USA, a persecution watchdog group, ranks Iraq as No. 8 on its World Watch List.

According to the 2018 report:

In Iraq, numerous groups contribute to Christian persecution. Radical movements such as the Islamic State (IS) group target Iraqi Christians and other religious minorities for kidnappings and killings. Islamic leaders slander Iraqi Christians in mosques, leading to further persecution. Government officials, both national and local, have threatened Iraqi Christians, “encouraging” them to leave the country. Political parties who hinder pluralism also contribute to the persecution of Iraqi Christians in the public space. Moreover, Iraqi Christians from Muslim backgrounds face serious pressure from their clans, families and communities, who will sometimes go so far as to try to kill them. At the same time, within Christianity, leaders of historic churches have sometimes thwarted official recognition of newer Iraqi Christian denominations.

David Curry, president of Open Doors USA, says, “Christianity was birthed in the Middle East, so it’s appropriate and right that the Iraqi government is creating space for religious freedom for Christians.”