



**FOCUS -
Iraq - Canon Andrew White
writes from Baghdad**

**Persecution of Christians -
Pope Francis is very concerned**



**Things are so bad now in Iraq, the worst they have ever
been writes Canon Andrew White**

Andrew White is the Anglican priest at St George's Church in Baghdad. He writes - The Islamic terrorists have taken control of the whole of Mosul which is Nineveh the main Christian stronghold. The army have even fled. We urgently need help and support.

Iraq is now in its worst crisis since the 2003 war. ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria Group), a group that does not even see Al Qaida as extreme enough, has moved into Mosul, which is Nineveh. It has totally taken control, destroyed all government departments. Allowed all prisoners out of the prisons. Killed countless numbers of people. There are bodies over the streets. The army and police have fled, so many of the military resources have been captured. Tankers, armed vehicles and even helicopters are now in the hands of ISIS.

The area is the heartland of the Christian community. Most of our people come from Nineveh and still see that as their home. It is there that they return to regularly. Many Christians fled from back to Nineveh from Baghdad, as things got so bad there. Now the Christian centre of Iraq has been totally ransacked. The tanks are moving into the Christian villages destroying them

and causing total carnage. The ISIS militants are now moving towards Kirkuk, major areas to the Oil fields that provide the lifeblood of Iraq. We are faced with total war that all the Iraqi military have now retreated from.

People have fled in their hundreds of thousands to Kurdistan still in Iraq for safety. The Kurds have even closed the border, preventing entry of the masses. The crisis is so huge it is almost impossible to consider what is really happening.

The summer is by far our worst time of the year for support. Both our Foundation in the UK and US have seriously had to reduce our funding. We are in a desperate crisis. So many of our people had returned their homes in Nineveh for the summer now they are stuck in this total carnage unable to even escape. We desperately need help so that we can help the Christians of this broken land just get through this new crisis. Please can you help us, we are desperate.

The terrible fact is that ISIS are in the control now of Fallujah in the South and Mosul in the North they could now move down towards Baghdad between the two and cause a total crisis there. So to be honest I don't know what to do, do I stay or go back? I have a huge amount of commitments here. If I go back, I cannot change the situation but I want to be with my people. Here we are with this huge crisis and need and we do not even have the resources to help those most in need.

With much love and grace,



**The Foundation
for Relief and
Reconciliation in
the Middle East**

**St George's Church,
Baghdad, Iraq**

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available to all in need and the vital reconciliation work can continue, particularly at this most difficult of times.

ISIS makes Mosul's Christians pay \$250 poll tax amid economic hardships



ISIS is forcing Christians in Mosul to pay the jizya tax for non-Muslims.

Mosul residents fleeing the ISIS

The militant group has imposed a minimum payment of \$250 on Christians in the city, according to Salama Al Khafaji, a member of the Council of the High Commission for Human Rights in Iraq.

The [AINA news agency](#) was quoting Arabic language website, Alsumaria News, in its report in which Al Khafaji explained that the amount Christians have to pay will vary depending on their profession.

"The economic situation in Mosul is extremely difficult, and there are no financial resources or job opportunities except for vegetable shops, any other businesses are non-existent," she said.

"Citizens are at a loss now as to how to make ends meet; how can they pay those amounts to ISIS?"

The AINA news agency posted another disturbing [report](#) to its site of people in Mosul and other ISIS-controlled areas being forced to send their unmarried women to "jihad by sex".

The report included an image of the original decree in Arabic in which ISIS threatens punishment for those who do not obey their order.

"After liberation of the State of Nineveh, and the welcome shown by the people of the state to their brotherly

mujahideen, and

after the great conquest, and the defeat of the Safavid [Persian] troops in the State of Nineveh, and its liberation, and Allah willing, it will become the headquarters for the mujahideen," it states.

"Therefore we request that the people of this state offer their unmarried women so that they can fulfill their duty of jihad by sex to their brotherly mujahideen. Failure to comply with this mandate will result in enforcing the laws of Sharia upon them."



An Iraqi Christian woman leaves a church in Tal Kaeef north of Mosul.

Persecution of Christians worse than in early Church, says Pope Francis

Pope Francis says he is pained that Christians suffer so much discrimination.

The persecution of Christians today is greater than in the first centuries of the Church, Pope Francis has said.

At a conference in Rome the Pope said he was "greatly pained to note that Christians around the world are suffering the greatest part of this discrimination. The persecution of Christians today is even greater than in the first centuries of the Church, and there are more Christian martyrs today than in that era."

The Pope addressed organisers, speakers and participants at a conference entitled “International Religious Liberty and the Global Clash of Values”. The conference was organised by the centres for Law and Religion and for



International and Comparative Law at St John’s University in New York and the Department of Law at Rome’s LUMSA University.

He said that real religious liberty included the freedom to live according to the values taught by one’s faith.

“Religious freedom is not just a matter of thought or private devotion,” the Pope said. “It is the freedom to live – both privately and publicly – according to the ethical principles that are a consequence of the truth found.”

Pope Francis said ensuring people’s right to live their religious values was increasingly difficult in the modern world “where weak thinking – this is a sickness – lowers the level of ethics in general and, in the name of a false understanding of tolerance, ends up persecuting those who defend the truth about the human person and its ethical consequences”.

A natural part of being human, he said, is seeking the truth about the origin and ultimate destiny of one’s life, one’s connection to the cosmos and one’s place in history.

“In the human mind and heart there arise questions and thoughts that cannot be repressed or suffocated” because they emerge naturally, he said.

Religious freedom is a “fundamental right of the human person” and a recognition of the dignity of the human capability “to seek the truth and adhere to it”, the Pope said.

National and international laws and organisations must “recognise, guarantee and protect religious liberty”, the Pope said. Religious freedom is “an indicator of a healthy democracy and one of the principal sources of a nation’s legitimacy”.

As he has said repeatedly, Pope Francis told the conference participants it is “incomprehensible and worrying” that even as worldwide appeals to human rights grow, “discrimination and restriction of rights persist based only on belonging to and publicly professing a certain faith”.

“It is unacceptable that real persecution – and even wars – continue based on religious belonging,” he said.

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