



PRAY FOR PERSECUTED BROTHERS & SISTERS

Pray for the Persecuted Christians in Iraq



Total Population: 40,412,000

Evangelistic Witness: Less than 0.01%)

Grappling with Trauma and Rebuilding

Many Iraqi Christians are still recovering from the brutal reign of ISIS, and for some believers, that threat has not fully diminished. Although ISIS has lost territory in Iraq, their ideology remains and has influenced society. Many of the militants have simply blended back into the general population. Another important driver of persecution are Shia militias who helped drive out ISIS and have gained authority and territory in the power vacuum left after ISIS was defeated.

Additionally, Christians are dealing with a drastic reduction in their population since ISIS began their attacks, along with trauma for those believers who have stayed in their country. Iraq remains very tribal, which can also mean significant pressure for believers who come from Muslim tribes-conversion to Christianity is seen as a rejection of heritage and family. Christians from Muslim backgrounds often keep their faith a secret, since they may be attacked by family members or others in the community if their new faith is discovered.

Iraq has fallen two spots in the 2020 World Watch List, and has seen its overall persecution score reduce. This is primarily due to the decrease in violence against believers and a reduction in the number of Christians attacked or killed for their faith.

How Christians Are Suffering

The Assyrian Church of the East, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Syrian Catholic Church, the Chaldean Catholic Church and the Armenian Orthodox Church are all seriously affected by persecution in Iraq, especially from Islamic extremist movements and non-Christian leaders. They also face discrimination from government authorities. In central and southern Iraq, Christians often do not publicly display Christian symbols, such as a cross, as this can lead to harassment or discrimination at checkpoints, universities, government buildings and in workplaces. Even Christians in the Iraqi Kurdish Region (IKR) have reportedly removed the cross from their cars to avoid unwanted attention.

Christians with a Muslim background experience most pressure from extended family and often keep their faith a secret to avoid threats from family members, clan leaders and the society around them. Converts to Christianity from Islam risk losing their inheritance rights and the right or means to marry. Openly leaving Islam leads to difficult situations throughout the country.

Examples

- Three Christian converts from Islam were killed for faith-related reasons in the 2020 World Watch List reporting period. For security reasons, no further details can be given.
- Two elderly Christian ladies were violently assaulted in their home in Bartella in May 2019. The mother (89) and daughter (69) had to be hospitalized, and jewelry and other valuables were stolen. Two suspects of Shabak ethnicity were arrested. As Middle East Concern reports: "Christians view the incident as part of a systematic campaign against Christians which aims to change the area's demographic composition."

Pray for Iraq

- Pray for youth training programs led by our local partner organization in the Nineveh Plains. Pray for the future of these youth, that the Lord will give them courage and strength to stand up to trials.

- Please continue to pray for the staff of our local partners in Iraq. They often travel across the country on dangerous roads. Ask the Lord to protect them from all dangers when they go out to spread the gospel among those hungering for Jesus.
- Pray for Christian political leaders and ask God to give them wisdom over their daily decisions. Pray they will listen to God's voice and represent well the people they serve.
- Pray for hope for the displaced Christian families from Mosul. Very few Christians from the city have returned because the security situation remains unstable.